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# INTRODUCTION

*After Arvedui the North-kingdom ended,*
*for the Dúnedain were now few*
*and all the peoples of Eriador diminished.*

What you hold in your hands is a guide to the peoples inhabiting the Lone-lands of Southern Eriador, the places they dwell in and the hopes they hold for their future in the Twilight of the Third Age. It is intended primarily for Loremasters, who can find among these pages the inspiration they require to bring Middle-earth to life as the Player-heroes explore it. Players should refrain from reading this, with the exception of those parts detailing areas their characters might reasonably be knowledgeable about.

The material presented in Ruins of the Lost Realm assumes that the date is the same as the one in *The One Ring* — the year 2965.

## OVERVIEW

*Ruins of the Lost Realm* complements the setting information presented in *The One Ring* Core Rules, in particular the material found in *Chapter 9: The World*, and in the Appendix.

*Chapter 1: Fog Over Eriador* expands the possibilities for adventure, including regions of Southern Eriador once part of the kingdom of Arnor. The city of Tharbad and its troubled history is given special attention, as it may serve as the starting point for the adventures of a Company of Player-heroes focused on exploring the surrounding Lone-lands.

*Chapter 2: A Gathering Storm* provides the Loremaster with a set of narrative elements that can be used to determine the fate of Eriador. What is contained in this chapter is the product of speculation and can be employed as presented, or altered as the Loremaster sees fit, to better tailor the setting to the players' choices. In a few words, it constitutes a possible future for the land of Eriador as a whole, offering the description of many looming threats, complete with Loremaster characters and their agendas.

*Chapter 3: Landmarks* adds 12 sites of interest to the one presented in the core volume. These locations depict both 'historical' sites mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*, and others that have been invented specifically for the game. They all conform to the format of presentation outlined on page 221 of *The One Ring*, and are meant to be used in conjunction with the guidelines presented there, and the information contained in *Chapter 2* of the present volume.

### THIS EMPTY LAND

Making Southern Eriador a living, breathing setting for a roleplaying game required a loose interpretation of those parts of the stories that dealt with the region. For example, in the Tale of Years presented in Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*, the entry for the year 2912 states that Tharbad was 'ruined and deserted' as a consequence of great floods that struck the area — in the present volume, we've chosen to read that as Tharbad being mostly abandoned, but that the town limps on under the unlawful rule of bandits for another two generations. The land is still lonely and underpopulated, but roleplaying games need people to talk to, so wherever possible, we've added characters. If you choose to interpret the words of Tolkien differently, then Tharbad and Lond Daer might both be desolate and empty by 2965.

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A day's travel outside Bree lie the Lone-lands — deserted lands, ruins of the old kingdom. Once, these lands were tame and plentiful. Today, they have grown wild. To the south of Bree was the Kingdom of Cardolan. Elves called the region Minhiriath, the land between the rivers, bounded by the Brandywine to the north and the Greyflood to the south. What is now the Shire of the Hobbits was once the vineyard of the kings of old. But there are dozens of other stretches of once-fruitful territory in the Lone-lands, and no one dwells there now. War and plague and the eternal hatred of the Enemy destroyed the folk who lived here. Everywhere there are ruins of the old kingdom — a bridge of stone, a patch of paved road, a lonely watch-tower — but one must travel for much longer than a single day between such glimpses of the past.



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The slow-moving waters of the Greyflood mark the region's southern border. Beyond it, the land becomes even more desolate: treeless moors, dusty plains, sucking marshes. This is Enedwaith, the Middle-land between the kingdoms. A traveller might be forgiven for thinking that the Enemy brought ruin to this place, but the worst evils here were done by Men, and the land has not forgotten their cruelty. Enedwaith is a bitter land, a region of old battlefields and new ambushes, a harsh land for the harsh folk who dwell here in hidden places. In the south, it rolls into Dunland, and on to the banks of the Isen river that flows from the Gap of Rohan.

Turn west. Follow the river to the sea. The west coast of Middle-earth is steep and stony, with few good places to land — for twice the world has been utterly changed, westerly lands drowned by the wrath of the Valar, and now waves crash against rocks that once stood far inland. The few harbours at the river-mouths are prized, and the remnants of ancient fortifications can be seen in such places. The western coast is as far as anyone can flee the growing darkness in the East, for the seas are now bent and only the Elves can escape.

If the Shadow rises, then Eriador is where the Free Folk will make their final stand.

# The City of Tharbad

*"I lost my horse at Tharbad, at the fording of the Greyflood."*

These are the dying days of Tharbad. Everyone knows it, especially those who have witnessed the city's slow decline over the years. They know that Tharbad has always shambled on from crisis to crisis: the city is an immense wounded beast, a heavy creature wallowing in the muddy water, too stubborn and hungry to ever give up. But Tharbad has suffered a mortal injury, and soon it will fall. It will be one more ruin of the old kingdom, silent and abandoned.

That is an astounding thing, if you think about it. Tharbad is ancient. If these are indeed the last days of the old city, then great changes are in the air, and the turning of an Age is at hand!

## Old Lore

There has been a settlement at the crossing of the Greyflood since Men first came to this part of the world. But time grinds hard stones to meal, slays kings, and ruins towns, and the Tharbad of today is very different from that of old.

### The First Two Ages of the World

In the First Age, Men dwelt in the woods and marshes along the river; for the most part, they were a simple forest-dwelling people, unwelcoming to outsiders and fearful of the wider world. Some traded with the Dwarves of Moria, and learned a little of their craft and ways, becoming kings in their little kingdoms and raising towns and castles that have long since crumbled into dust and been forgotten. Most, though, clung to their own customs, surviving as best they could in the dark woods, hiding from the nameless darkness in the North.

Later, the Sea-kings came from the West. Wood-hungry, they cut down the forests to build their ships, and floated the trees downriver to their haven at the mouth of the river. In time, they cut such a wound in the forests that they needed a port further upriver, and they chose the crossing-point that would become Tharbad. A town grew up around the port, a crossroads where the Sea-kings of Númenor traded with the Dwarves of Moria and the Elves of Hollin. The Men of the West were peerless craftsmen, and the city of Tharbad was glorious indeed.

But that was long ago, and little of that first city remains. Who remembers the banners fluttering in the wind atop hundreds of masts, numerous as trees in a forest? Who remembers that Sauron the Terrible suffered defeat not far from Tharbad, in the forgotten first war between the Elves and the Enemy? Only the Elves, and they are gone from this land.

Tharbad was many things as the Second Age wore on — a fortress in the midst of hostile lands, a river-port and centre of trade, a place where the Sea-kings demanded tribute from their subjects, a declining outpost on the edge of empire. Númenor fell into darkness, then ruin — but out of that ruin came the Faithful of Elendil and his sons. They founded the North-kingdom of Arnor and the South-kingdom of Gondor, and built great cities at Annúminas in the north and Osgiliath in the south. To bind their two far-flung kingdoms together, the Faithful built a great Road across Middle-earth, and at Tharbad they raised a new bridge across the wide and sullen Greyflood.



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## THE THIRD AGE

The Bridge of Tharbad — oh, to look upon it one more time! It leapt in three great stone arches from the south bank to a central pillar rising in the middle island, and then with three more arches reached the northern shore. Two mighty towers guard it, their foundations made of the same imperishable stone as the tower of Orthanc. The bridge is broken now, but sometimes the fog that rises on the river seems to settle atop the remains of the mutilated pillars, and the city remembers.

For a time, Tharbad stood at the crossroads of the world. It was part of neither Arnor nor Gondor, but shared between the two crowns. The Captain of the Haven of Tharbad was a title of special magnificence and renown. Even when the North Kingdom broke into the successor realms of Arthedain, Cardolan and Rhudaur, Tharbad maintained considerable independence — which rankled with the kings of Cardolan. But traffic between the kingdoms diminished as war and plague took their toll, and grass grew between the flagstones of the Road of Kings.

When the last prince of Cardolan perished and his kingdom faded, Tharbad endured, ruled by a long line of officers, each in turn holding the honorary title of Captain of the Haven. For a time, there was trade with the wealthy Dwarves of Moria, but they too fell victim to the treacheries of the Enemy. Kingdom by kingdom, city by city, town by town, the North fell into darkness. Tharbad faded, too — its population never recovered after the Great Plague, and much of the city fell into disrepair.



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## DAYS OF DECLINE

All that, though, is ancient history. Moria and the plague were a thousand years ago — and the folk of Tharbad are short-lived mortal Men, not hardy Dúnedain or immortal Elves. For many years, the singers kept telling tales of kings of old who came over the sea to lay down in the barrows to die, and sometimes travellers came up the Road with news of the south. But for the most part, Tharbad was no longer a crossroads, and no ships were seen sailing up the river. The surrounding area began to be troubled by bandits and thieves, and only the mighty fortifications of old kept Tharbad safe. The ruined city became an isolated fastness amid the wilds of Minhiriath, where honest folk could take refuge from brigands or Dunlending raiders.

Then, fifty years ago came the Fell Winter. Those days were bad, indeed — the crops died, and the land froze, and Wargs came west of the Misty Mountains to hunt. What followed, though, was worse. In spring, all the snow heaped on the hills and peaks melted, and the rivers swelled and burst their banks. Well-named was the Greyflood that awful summer, for the usually-quiet river grew dark and terrible, and floodwaters poured through the town, washing away hundreds among the surviving inhabitants of Tharbad. The river in its wrath could not destroy the ancient piers that supported the bridge, but many arches crumbled, and their mighty stones fell into the raging currents.

Tharbad had suffered many disasters in the past, and the bridge had already fallen into disuse, so perhaps the city could have weathered this calamity, if it were not for the weakness and folly of Men. The succession of Captains of the Haven after the floods of 2912 were among the worst elected in Tharbad in all its long history, leading up to the disastrous reign of Master Heatherton, who was the first to drop the honorary title of Captain and who imposed an unpopular tax to repair the bridge — only to flee along with several of his cronies and the contents of the town coffers. When even the following Master abandoned his post, taking with him his chain of office, many citizens feared Tharbad was doomed, and fled the decaying city. Some headed north to the Bree-land or down the river towards the sea; others, fearing a perilous journey, took refuge amidst the reeds in Swanfleet.

## THE PRESENT DAY

When it seemed as if the city would soon be utterly abandoned, the arrival of the new Master arrested the stream of people leaving the city. Master Gurnow reclaimed for himself the title of Captain of the Haven and forbade anyone else from leaving Tharbad, compelling everyone to remain unless they paid a steep gate-tax.

It is a little… indelicate to mention such a thing, but you should know that Captain Gurnow was, until recently, an outlaw and a bandit. He commanded a host of thieves who dwelt in the wilderness north of town. These former thieves have been appointed as the city watch, tax collectors, bailiffs and other officials. Gurnow married Lady Stock, a woman of good family and royal blood, and so is clearly set on being an upstanding and law-abiding steward of Tharbad's ancient office of Captain.

Be of good cheer! Captain Gurnow is a strong leader, like a king of old! He has sworn to keep the Road safe, and to repair the bridge, and protect the city from those who would do it harm. He has many friends in other lands, too, and will bring new trade and opportunities to old Tharbad. The tale of the city may not be finished yet…



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## A GUIDE TO THARBAD

A visitor approaching Tharbad from the north or south sees first the two towers guarding both approaches to the bridge. If the light is good and the air is clear, the traveller might tell even at this distance that both towers are in disrepair, and the topmost levels are crumbling and unusable. Draw closer still, and the traveller sees the massive walls of Garth Tauron, the old fortress on the northern bank of the Greyflood, rising as if some errant giant took a piece of the Misty Mountains and hurled it down to the plains below. The condition of the ancient stronghold is even worse than that of the two bridge-towers; its stone has been extensively quarried over the years, and much of the castle has been reduced to rubble.

As it reaches the town, the Road runs on ancient causeways of packed earth and stone, to lift it above the fens. In places, dark tunnels run beneath the causeways; these were designed to stop floodwaters building up on the east side of the road. Nowadays, these passages offer shelter to thieves — or Trolls, hiding from the sunlight.

### THE OUTER DISTRICTS

On both sides of the river, Tharbad is fenced by a first curtain wall, still referred to as the *ram* by the inhabitants of the city, today no more than a ring of piled earth and broken stone, especially along its northern perimeter. Despite its dilapidated conditions, a new gatehouse opens in the *ram* to the north, ensuring that tolls are collected from anyone coming to sell their goods in town — here, copies of Gurnow's Rules are nailed up on posts for all to see.

A second wall once rose at a distance within the first one, its length now marked only by an encircling road. Between the two boundaries lie the town's outer districts, now mostly deserted. Here are many once-great houses and halls, all now overgrown and falling into ruin, or half-buried in mud. Sheep crop the grass contentedly in what were once wide plazas, and apple-trees sprout in the courtyards of long-abandoned inns. If a traveller is a Dwarf or a scholar of stonework, they will note with dismay that these buildings are of lesser quality compared to the towers glimpsed in the distance (and if our traveller's heart falls at this sight, they should steel themselves for a shock when they reach the centre of the city).

Off the Road to the east and west are some small farms and vineyards, shielded by the outer walls. The land outside the *ram* is a wetland, especially to the south, but old drainage tunnels under the city leech away the worst of the water, leaving a rich dark soil that's good for growing vegetables. These tunnels must be cleared of weeds and debris regularly, or the town will revert to marshland.

The most prominent landmark of the outer district to the south is certainly the old Library of Tharbad. Built on two levels and still standing, the library is an architectural marvel, with high vaulted ceilings allowing for the light of the sun to enter its many niches, where innumerable rare books and scrolls were stored for protection in times of war. Long since despoiled of its main riches in gold and lore, the library is guarded by an old woman, Agna, who cares for the library as best she can, copying the surviving scrolls by candlelight onto fresh parchment.



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In the northern district opens the Ghost Pit, a spot near the walls where no living thing seems to be able to grow and no building stands. Even the sheep avoid it. Sometimes, the earth convulses, and the pit spits up strange tokens — old and rusted swords, pieces of armour, leathery strips of preserved flesh, and other disturbing portents. Long ago, a host of Elves and Númenóreans defeated one of Sauron's armies on the northern banks of the Greyflood. Many Orcs and other fell beasts were slain in the fray. Afterwards, the victors hurled the remains of Sauron's forces into a sucking pit of mud.

Near the Ghost Pit is the abandoned House Without Windows; this was the home of a strange woman named Theoris, who was reputed to be a sorceress. She bricked up all the windows of her home, and lived only by candle-light; it's said that she dug secret passages down into the soft ground, and that she found treasures in the mud and foul water that flows from the Ghost Pit. It was water that doomed Theoris, too — she was among those washed away in the floods of 2912, and her house has remained sealed since.

### *Agna the Librarian*

Agna has seen at least sixty years; she was a young girl when the floods brought ruin to Tharbad, drowning her family. She was taken in as a servant by another family, but never recovered from that loss. When that second family abandoned Tharbad, Agna stayed behind. Her late mother was a scholar, and the one thing Agna held onto was a reverence for the written word. In her later years, then, Agna came to care for those scrolls and books that remained in the library, cherishing them like pets or children. She can barely read and write the Common Tongue, let alone the Ancient Tongue that many of the scholarly books use, but over the years she's taught herself to precisely copy the shape of the letters, and her transcriptions are accurate.

Agna is extremely protective of her books; she will permit a scholarly hero to use the library, but she keeps her quill-sharpening knife to hand at all times, and will attack anyone who hurts her precious things. Some rumours say that Agna knows of a secret chamber, where the last librarian of Tharbad stored many precious manuscripts, to save them from pillagers.

**OCCUPATION:** Copyist

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** Dutiful, Short-sighted

## THE SOUTH BANK

The empty and overgrown outer district to the south encircles the inhabited inner part of the city standing on a rise along the banks of the Greyflood. If one follows the Road, they will eventually reach the southern bridge-tower, Ringil, now used by the men of the city garrison as their barracks. On the other side of the passageway piercing the tower, the road meets an abrupt end, as the great arches that leapt across the river to reach the middle island are now gone. A new-built path leads down to the river from the Road, running past the tower and along the side of the causeway as it winds down to the wooden piers on the shore below.

But if one was to look to the left from this vantage point, their eyes would follow the river downstream, its waters rushing through a labyrinth of broken stone. Those are all that remains of the mighty port of Tharbad, destroyed in the great floods of 2912. Its docks date back to the days of Númenor, and were once of vital importance to the city. Ships could sail this far north up the Greyflood from the haven of Lond Daer, to the south. Now, the docks are gone and the river has not been dredged in centuries, so only small boats can sail the Greyflood. A number of such vessels are tied up downstream of the wreckage; these are guarded by the city watch, and cannot be used without permission from the Master of the town.

There are a few inhabitants in this part of town, mostly guards and sentries, but also eager ferrymen who can carry passengers across the river to the Middle Island, or directly to the North Bank. The bridge, they say, is temporarily out for repair, and they gesture at the pillars of black stone.

The most lively place in the South Bank is the Road-house, the only inn remaining on this side of the river. It's not a welcoming place, but travellers who arrive after the last ferry-crossing are obliged to stay here under guard, even though there are many empty buildings elsewhere in the ruins that are still intact enough to offer shelter.

Nearby is a hallowed relic, the Pillar of the Two Kingdoms. This marble column marks the spot where emissaries from Arnor and Gondor would meet to discuss matters of import to both realms. Inscriptions wound about the column mark the distance from this point to the city of Annúminas to the north, and Osgiliath to the south. Once a symbol of solidarity and friendship, it is now used by Gurnow's men as the spot where they administer 'justice', punishing in varying degrees of severity those who defy the rules of Captain Gurnow.



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## THE MIDDLE ISLAND

The Middle Island was once just a spike of stone in the middle of the river. When the great bridge was built, the solid rock of the nameless isle anchored the central pillar. Earth and soil and stone was dumped on the little island, and pilings made of alder and larch wood were planted deeply along its shores to consolidate and expand them.

In recent years, the Island has become much more important to the town. Gurnow's men enlarged it even further, replacing the soil and pilings torn away by the floods of 2912. Tharbad's forges and smithies were relocated here, on the grounds of fire safety. Later on, other important trades were moved here, crowding the little island with the town's crafters and tradesmen, their workshops all piled on each other like chambers in an anthill, each one striving to remain above the level of the waters.

If anyone asks, Gurnow insists that this relocation was for the benefit and safety of the townsfolk. The island is protected on all sides by the river and is easily defensible even if the walls and towers fall to attackers. However, it's clear that the real purpose was to stop people leaving the dying town — the Middle Island isn't quite a prison, but it does ensure that Tharbad's valued citizens cannot sneak away in the night, taking their skills and treasure with them.

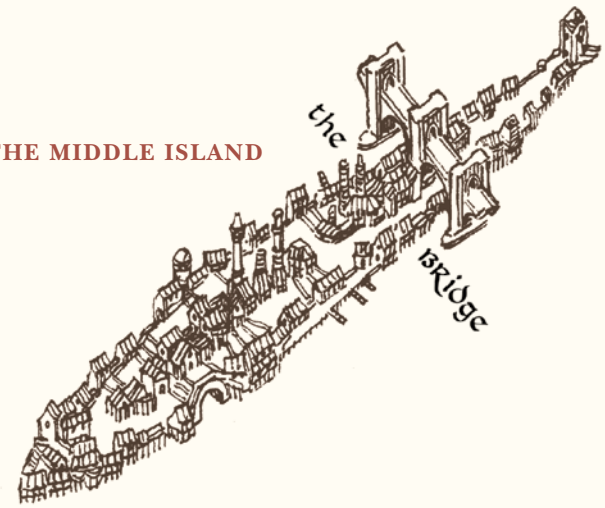
The Middle Island can only be reached by boat, or by wading through the river when the waters are low.

### *Milton the Brewer*

A typical citizen of Tharbad, Milton's a master brewer. His ale is delicious, the equal of the best the Shire can produce. In another time, or another town, Milton would be rich and honoured for his craft. Here in Tharbad, Milton dares not think beyond the next year's harvest – he knows that if he defies Gurnow or tries to flee, the men of the Captain of the Haven will stave in his barrels and smash his brewery, and he'll starve on the streets.

**OCCUPATION:** Beer-maker

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Resigned




THE MIDDLE ISLAND

### *Jan the Frog*

So much grime and river-mud cake Jan's features that it's hard to tell if she's a boy or girl, a lanky child or a Hobbit. She paddles about on her little boat, surviving as best she can amid the ruins. Some days, she brings passengers across the river; other days, you'll find her catching fish, or wandering about the wreckage of the old town, or smuggling things off the Middle Island. She knows how to stay on the right side of the dividing line between 'nuisance' and 'enemy' in Gurnow's eyes, and buys the gang's favour by spying on people in Tharbad, citizens and strangers alike. Not much happens on the riverbank that escapes Jan's eyes.

**OCCUPATION:** Scavenger, Spy

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Wary

### *Roper Grey*

Roper Grey is a young man. As his name suggests, he's a rope-maker – but it's likely he'll soon find himself hanging from one. He agitates against the self-titled Captain of the Haven, arguing that the folk of Tharbad should fight back against their oppressors. His own sister was forced into marrying one of Gurnow's men, and he hasn't seen her in months. Grey's grumblings about Gurnow have turned into plotting and trying to recruit fighting men, but so far his efforts have met with little success. The Player-heroes may be able to aid him, or convince him to flee Tharbad – if not, Roper's rebellion has no chance of succeeding.

**OCCUPATION:** Rope-maker, Would-be revolutionary

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Fierce



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### CAPTAIN GURNOW'S RULES

1. No Fording the River, for reasons of Public Safety.
2. No Disobedience or Defiance
3. Those Who Dwell in Tharbad may not Leave Tharbad without Permission, and if They do not Return Promptly, Penalties apply to their Kin.
4. No Wasting Food, nor Firewood. No Sharing of the Above.
5. Tolls must be Paid by Peddlars, Merchants, Tinker-smiths, Treasure Hunters, Knights-errant, Messengers and all other Strangers.
6. Taxes must be Paid by Those Who Dwell within the Walls, to pay for Maintenance and Defence.
7. In All Other Matters, the King's Law holds.

### THE NORTH BANK

The northern portion of Tharbad is the most populous. The ferry from the south bank docks in the shadow of the northern tower, Helcar. The northern tower is in even worse repair than its counterpart, and sways alarmingly in high winds, but the ancient Toll Gate opening under its passageway is still intact — here, long ago, the Númenóreans accepted tribute from the tribes of Minhiriath. An ancient tale speaks of a corrupt governor who kept this tribute for himself, and buried a fortune in gold somewhere near Tharbad. If luck is with Tharbad, when Helcar finally crumbles it will fall into the river, or on top of the ruined fortress of Garth Tauron. The fortress itself has been extensively quarried for stone, and now only one small section is habitable; Gurnow uses it as the town gaol.

Nearby stands the Captain's Mansion, where Lord Gurnow, his wife and his many children dwell (see page 14). Other residents of Tharbad cluster around the mansion, and the town's market is held in a square nearby.

THE NORTH BANK

Tharbad's best inn (of the two inns in town) is the Bridge Inn; proprietor Timothy Titus. Titus is a big man with fists like hamhocks and a scarred, broken-toothed face. He was one of Gurnow's thieves, but he's taken to innkeeping with alarming enthusiasm, terrifying his guests with his friendly solicitations ("Do you WANT any bloody thing to EAT? No? Right to BED, is it?! I won't MURDER you in your SLEEP, don't WORRY!"). He has discovered a Hobbitish enthusiasm for cooking, which makes a stay at the inn more pleasant than one might expect from its dilapidated exterior. The Bridge Inn is a sprawling building, and the rooms once used for guests are now occupied by the city watch.



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The best-maintained house in the area is surely the home of Amelia Kern. The gentlewoman is semi-retired these days, but she still has a secret sign on her door for those who can read such things. Amelia is a Burglar & Treasure Hunter, one of the most successful in the North in recent years. She recovered treasures from tombs and Troll lairs — and from the homes of certain wealthy Dwarves in the Blue Mountains — before retiring to the comparative safety of Tharbad.

## *Amelia Kern, Burglar and Treasure Hunter*

Aristocratic and impeccably dressed, Amelia Kern is obviously an individual of wealth and taste. Tomb robbing and burglary are clearly profitable enterprises, although Kern spent much of her career down in the Southlands, and can tell tales of distant Gondor and Umbar over a sherry. Although she no longer wishes to risk life and limb in treasure hunting, she maintains a professional interest in the field, and sometimes gives adventurers tips and pointers, suggesting places they might consider investigating or offering advice on technique. All she asks in return is a small percentage of any profits. (Just don't get her started on Bilbo Baggins, not unless you want a lengthy rant on how lucky amateurs not demanding their full fourteenth share of any treasures despite it being clearly mentioned in the burglar's contract damages the profession and reduces the ability of other burglars to enforce such clauses with other clients.)

Kern's relationship with Gurnow and the other thieves is fraught. Firstly, as Kern would point out, they're not professional thieves, just violent bandits. A professional thief doesn't need to bully people. Second, Gurnow covets Kern's treasure, but Kern has hinted that her house is magically protected against intruders, and none of Gurnow's men is willing to risk the possibility that Kern's telling the truth.

**OCCUPATION:** Retired adventurer, Burglar

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:** Honourable, Lordly

### THE COURT OF LORD GURNOW

The Captain's mansion is a palace, by the standards of these fallen years, and by the name used by the inhabitants of Tharbad to refer to it: the Red Palace. It was the seat of princes and lords of Arnor for many centuries, and that of Captains after the North Kingdom and its successors failed. The current incarnation of the seat of power in Tharbad is an imposing three-storey building, built upon the foundations of the previous palaces in the days of the last kings of Cardolan, to strengthen their hold on Tharbad. The stonecunning of its makers was no match for the works of their ancestors, and the Red Palace is a crumbling and draughty mansion. Its lowest floor was flooded in 2912 and has never been properly repaired. Still, in an age when many count themselves lucky to have a wooden hut to call home, the palace is a magnificent abode, especially by night when it gleams by the light of a hundred candles. The life-size statues of Elendil and Isildur that watch over the main entrance were carved by artists who saw the kings of old with their own eyes. The exterior walls are plastered red, and the coating has been slowly crumbling away, revealing the naked bricks under it in large patches. Inside, the palace's many halls and chambers are made lively by paintings and inscriptions, even if several have been defaced in recent years, especially on the ground floor.

The court, though, is a raucous place where Gurnow's brigands and sycophants drink in the reek and make merry, and their brats roll on the floor with the dogs. Lady Stock has long tried to enforce civility in her house, but when she retires for the night, chaos reigns — it's a rare evening when there isn't a brawl or a knifing. Gurnow often invites travellers



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to dine at his court to get the measure of their character; he may offer talented fighters a place in his 'city watch'. Rich travellers may get robbed as they leave the court; Gurnow finds some trumped-up breach of his Rules to justify the theft, as long as he gets his cut of the proceeds.

## *Gurnow, Captain of the Haven*

The present Master of town, Captain Gurnow, was a bandit in his youth — he led a warband of marauding outlaws. They robbed travellers on the Road, raided farmsteads and hamlets, looted barrows and graves, and generally made mischief throughout the land. When the floods destroyed much of Tharbad, it seemed a great opportunity to young Gurnow; the city was in chaos, and the guards had abandoned their posts. Tharbad had fallen, and there was no one to stop him from conquering it.

He was not stopped. Like the Greyflood, he was partially redirected.

The Captain is more than seventy years old, but he retains much of the strength of his youth, and the reforged gold chain of his office still sits comfortably on his wide shoulders. He rarely exerts himself, preferring to let others bring him tribute and solve problems without bothering him, and has little interest in learning more etiquette or history. Lord Gurnow has settled into his new life, and has grown lazy. However, he is a keen observer of vulnerabilities and opportunities; not only has he ruled Tharbad for nearly half a century, but he's also managed to play his many sons off against one another, ensuring that none of them replaces him as Captain. He also has learned how best to put warriors to use; bold actions and assertive behaviour are the easiest way to impress him.

**OCCUPATION:** Town master, Retired outlaw

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Cunning

## *Lady Stock*

Lady Almarian Stock comes from an ancient and noble family of Westernesse; her forefathers sailed with Elendil the Tall out of the wreck of Númenor. They have dwelt in Tharbad since the ancient days of the world, generation upon generation living and dying by the banks of the river. When the other old families of Tharbad abandoned the



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city, she held on — and in Gurnow, she saw the hope of saving her home. She convinced him that instead of ransacking the city, he could better profit by ruling it. Gurnow became Captain (it's easy to win popular support when you've got a warband of marauding outlaws), and she became his advisor and his bride.

All that was forty years ago. Almarian Stock is now in her seventies, and is as well-preserved as her husband. Their marriage has always been one of convenience, bound by mutual advantage and necessity, not love. She despises his crude, violent nature, but knows that it is his strength that keeps the city intact. He dislikes how she talks down to him, but values her counsel and her shrewd management of Tharbad's affairs. As they have aged together, their irritation with one another has grown with their dependence, and now their dooms are intertwined forever.

Lady Stock prides herself on preserving the culture and honour of Tharbad, and is determined to restore the city to its former glory, as it was before the flood and decline and long centuries of neglect took their toll. In her mind, this can only be done if proper tribute is paid to Tharbad from the other surviving folk in the North. She despises the Bree-land, calling the folk there inbred yokels who have forgotten the kings of old. She loathes Lond Daer for taking in many of those who "abandoned" Tharbad; she envies the Dwarves bitterly for their wealth and despises the Swanfleeters for their poverty. Above all, she hates the Rangers, holding them to be wanderers and thieves.

Lady Stock takes more of an interest in the affairs of the world than her husband; she values cold reasoning above the use of brute force.

**OCCUPATION:** Noblewoman

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Proud

## *Tharnow, son of Gurnow*

Captain Gurnow has seven sons, none of whom have any particular merits or distinguishing features; they are all brutish, greedy louts who terrorize the townsfolk. Tharnow is the eldest and holds the title of deputy Captain, but as his father stubbornly refuses to die and give Tharnow control of the town, the ambitious heir has begun to look elsewhere for wealth and glory. He's heard tales from Amelia Kern of the fabled treasures of Moria, and while Tharnow's more stupid than he is brave, that's still enough to make him consider mounting an expedition to the black pit of the Dwarves in search of long-forgotten gold.

**OCCUPATION:** Deputy Captain of the Haven

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Brutal

## *Gwilleth the Scout*

Gwilleth is one of Gurnow's brigands; dark-eyed and quiet, she's his best scout and tracker. In secret, she's one of the Rangers, sent to keep watch on Tharbad and to restrain the excesses of Gurnow's brutes. Gwilleth initially hoped she could make common cause with Lady Stock, but the lady of Tharbad hates the Rangers, so Gwilleth found herself alone in a hostile court. For now, she bides her time and slowly recruits allies among Gurnow's followers and the townsfolk.

**OCCUPATION:** Brigand, Tracker, Spy

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Secretive

## *Tom Brass, Watch Lieutenant*

Young Tom Brass is Tharbad-born and Tharbad-bred — but he never knew the town before Gurnow took over. As far as he knows, this has always been a place where might makes right and everyone's lives are controlled by the Captain and the watch. So, Tom Brass lives his life according to those rules — he's made himself useful to Gurnow, rising through the ranks of the watch and helping them grind his kinfolk into the river mud. He's useful to everyone — if you want something done or something fetched or something kept quiet, Tom's the man to talk to. If you want things done properly, and secretly, and without mess, Tom's the man for the job. He's not the best fighter in Tharbad, or the swiftest, but Tom knows that if he fails, he'll be back in the river mud with the rest of the townsfolk, and he's never going back down again.

In secret Tom nurtures his dangerous ambition, and he's waiting for an opportunity to eliminate old Gurnow and his brood, and take the Captain's throne for himself. Maybe all he needs is the right friends...

**OCCUPATION:** Watch Lieutenant

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Wilful



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## Tharbad's Environs

The lands around the city to the north are dotted with small farmsteads. The soil is good on this side of the river, enriched by flood and watered by rain on the shoulders of the Misty Mountains. The rolling hills to the south are better for sheep and cattle, which roam wild and shaggy across the empty lands of the Enedwaith; the rest of the area in the south is a wetland, that to the east becomes the vast fen of Swanfleet.

There are more ruins than inhabited buildings around Tharbad, but the population of the region has grown a little in the last few years, as some measure of order and civilisation is restored to the town. The farmers fear Gurnow, and pin their hopes of justice and fair treatment on Lady Stock.

The country folk are fearful of strangers, and unwelcoming; they urge travellers to continue on to Tharbad. If a traveller wins their trust, though, the folk here have many tales to tell. They speak of the dangers of Swanfleet and the Ghost Bird; they recommend checking the riverbank after a spring flood, for sometimes gold and other precious things wash down from the mountains of the Dwarves; they swear that a man cannot lie while standing on the stones of the King's Road, and that one day the king will return to save them from the Dunlendings, whom they fear above all other foes.

Go further than a day's walk from Tharbad north or south, and you come to empty lands, grey and sorrowful expanses where cold winds whip across treeless plains. The soil here was never tilled, nor did any folk dwell here in this nameless waste.

### THARBAD AS A SAFE HAVEN

Tharbad is certainly not as welcoming or warm a place as Rivendell or the Shire; it's a rotting town of thieves and brigands, ruled by a former warlord. However, in the empty lands of Southern Eriador, it's as close to a safe haven as one might find. It is certainly secure enough; the walls of Tharbad may be broken, but it's heavily fortified and easy to defend. It does offer a place to rest; as long as the heroes do not break Gurnow's laws or offend his cronies, they may sleep here soundly.

Now, a safe haven also offers wise counsel and restores hope and courage; places like Rivendell or Lórien are islands of light in the darkness, and guard the promise of a better world. Tharbad is an island, but there's little light here, and Gurnow is certainly not an Elf-lord or a good King. He's not wholly evil, but he is corrupt and venal, and makes for a poor Patron. If anything, it may be the Player-heroes who guide Gurnow towards wisdom — or who must overthrow him.

No, if there is hope here, it is in the hearts of the ordinary folk of Tharbad, those who endure under Gurnow's ungenerous protection. People like Agna (page 11) can offer the heroes wise counsel; Amelia Kern (page 14) or Gwilleth (page 16) may give the heroes aid or dispatch them on missions. Tharbad only marginally qualifies as a safe haven, but if the heroes spend time here, they can nurture the light that's hidden here.

If they do not, it will soon be snuffed out.



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# SWANFLEET

*Far to the west in a haze lay the meres and eyots through which it wound its way to the Greyflood: there countless swans housed in a land of reeds.*

Scholars and travellers consider the vast marshland known as the Swanfleet to be uninhabited, save for hosts of swans, and other water-birds. Curiously, this vast network of swamps and pools may instead be one of the most densely populated regions in Eriador.

For Swanfleet is home to the lost, and to those who fled their enemies and misfortunes. The local folk have many forefathers: the tribes of wild men who lived in the vast woods of Eriador, and were driven from their homes by the foresters of Númenor; Númenórean settlers who fled the coming of Sauron; folk from the North Kingdom who escaped the civil wars, or the war with Angmar.

Other people, too, have made Swanfleet their home. Elves hid here, High Elves of Eregion with all their might and artistry, reduced to living in muddy holes after the Enemy laid waste to their palaces. Dwarves took refuge here for a time, when their kingdom in the mountains was destroyed. Even Hobbits lived in Swanfleet — the ancestors of the Stoors settled here for many years, for these marshes are much like the Gladden Fields on the other side of the mountains.



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## A SECRET FOLK

So, what are they like today, these marsh-folk of many fathers? They are a guarded people, whose language is as much gesture and silence as it is speech, mixed with marvellous imitations of bird-calls. Typically, they avoid contact with outsiders, vanishing into the undergrowth or even swimming under the murky waters like otters to escape detection. If strangers trespass deeper into Swanfleet, then the marsh-folk use bird-calls to summon others of their tribe, so they can ambush the intruders with greater numbers — or else they call up the Ghost Bird (page 95) to deal with their enemies. However, they do welcome those fleeing hardship; it is the custom of the Swanfleeters to give charity and shelter to the desperate. Hobbits, too, can expect a warm welcome, for the Swanfleeters have legends of when 'little folk' lived in the marsh, and believe they bring good luck.

The marsh-folk live by catching fish and birds, and gathering roots and berries in the marsh. They rarely work metal, using stones and bones as tools, but they sometimes trade with Dwarven smiths for necessary items. They do not use coins, preferring to barter furs, hides and feathers from the marshes.

They dwell on artificial islands in the marsh, called crannogs or marshflets, which are linked by twisting walkways just below the surface of the water (this practice gives rise to the belief that the Swanfleeters can walk on water). The crannogs are hidden by weeds and mist, and are hard to reach unless you know the secret paths.

### GREAT SWANS AND TALKING OTTERS

Swans of gigantic size, taller than Men, dwell in the innermost reaches of the marsh. These birds flew out of the ruin of the west, and are said to have magical power over dreams. When they take flight, their shadows cause nightmares in those they pass over, and their cries can be heard in both the waking and dreaming worlds. Anyone who wears the feather of a great swan gains insight into the dreams of others for a time, and the Wise-women of Medcaute (see page 95) can make a potion from a swan's egg that grants prophetic visions. The swans are vicious and territorial, and it is well known that they can break a warrior's shield-arm with a single blow.

The marshes are also home to a population of otters (*nindraug*, in the Elvish tongue) who are descended from those who were awoken by the Elves of Eregion. Some of these otters retain the ability to speak in the tongues of mortals, as well as a talent for using tools; they are endlessly curious and gossipy, and are often willing to serve as guides through the marshes — for a fee, of course. (What does an otter do with money? They wait until a Dwarf-smith comes by, and then they buy clever toys to play with as they swim along. Where does an otter keep its money until then? In a riverbank!)

## MEDCAUTE AND SWANTOWN

The two largest settlements in the Swanfleet Marshes are called Swantown and Medcaute.

Swantown is located on the west side of the marshes. The river Glanduin splits into many channels as it meanders towards its meetings with the Greyflood, and Swantown lies hidden on a marshy island between two such streams. The village is a mix of crannogs and buildings on stilts, similar to the houses of Esgaroth on the Long Lake. Many of those who dwell in Swantown are recent arrivals in the marsh, and fled the devastation of Tharbad. Life in the marsh can be hard, and some grumble and mutter about returning to dry land, but fear living under the cruel hand of Captain Gurnow. They have tried to make Swantown more like home — there's a tavern of sorts there, the Two-necked Swan, and a blacksmith to repair the few tools they still own. There is often strife between the newcomers and the 'barbaric' marsh-folk, but for now they share Swanfleet. There is no lord in the town, but in time of need people look to Master Hugh Blackbriar.

Medcaute is another matter. The settlement here lies on the edge of a holy pool, and is ancient beyond the counting of mortal Men. It is the sacred place of the marsh-folk, and outsiders are forbidden to look upon the pool on penalty of death. The largest crannog in Medcaute is the House of Patient Women, where the Wise-women of Swanfleet dwell; the eldest of these is Mother Wendreth. These women preserve secrets from the dark days, taught to them by the Elves of Eregion, and it is said they can weave illusions and take on other forms if they desire. Medcaute is where the Swanfleeters gather on the rare occasions when they need to elect a war chief, but they have no other government or customs of leadership.



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## *Hugh Blackbriar, Master of Swantown*

Tall and commanding of aspect, Hugh Blackbriar once belonged to Gurnow's band of thieves. He quarrelled with the bandit leader and was left for dead in the marshes. By chance, Blackbriar survived and made his way to Swantown, where his fortunes and standing have both risen, and now he is seen by the people of that little settlement as a hero. Hugh has kept the truth about his criminal youth a secret, and claims instead to be a man of distant Laketown (Thorin Oakenshield and his kin sometimes encamped in Dunland, and word of Esgaroth came through them.) Hugh fights to defend Swantown — but preserving his own reputation and his new life and family is more important to him than anything else.

**OCCUPATION:** Town leader, Retired outlaw

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Tall

## *Mother Wendreth, Wise-woman*

Mother Wendreth is the elder of the House of Patient Women. She knows the secrets of the Hill of the Sleeper (see page 94) and has studied much of the ancient lore of healing that is recorded in that hidden palace. Patience defines Wendreth, often to the point of frustrating those around her; she knows there are times and tides in the affairs of mortals, and that the world will change around you if you wait long enough.

**OCCUPATION:** Town elder, Healer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Patient

### THE GHOST BIRD

The Ghost Bird is a legend of the marsh. The tale, as told in the taverns of Tharbad, speaks of a nightmarish figure, much taller than a man, with spindly limbs and a bird's skull for a face. The Ghost Bird lurks in the Swanfleet, and if anyone trespasses too far into the haunted marsh, it appears to murder them with its deadly spear. The Ghost Bird does not only defend Swanfleet, but also dispatches justice within it and settles disputes as a neutral arbiter between families. Those who cannot resolve a dispute may nail the skull of a bird to a tree outside their crannog; the Ghost Bird will arrive a few nights' later to make a judgement.

Tales of the Ghost Bird go back as far as anyone can remember, so surely it is some deathless Wight or spirit that guards the swamp (see page 95 for more on the Ghost Bird).



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# LOND DAER

*High towers that people built, and strong places, and havens of many ships...*

Follow the Greyflood to the sea, and it leads to the Firth and the town of Lond Daer. Dying Tharbad clings to its proud history; reborn Lond Daer is almost wholly ignorant of its even more ancient lineage. Thousands of years ago, this place was the New Haven of the Sea-kings, the first outpost of the Númenóreans beyond their enchanted isle. It was here that the mariners of Númenor built their great ships to voyage north and south, exploring all the shores of Middle-earth that are permitted to mortals; here that wars were fought in ancient days, against the wild folk of the forests and the forces of the Enemy. It was here that the armies of the West came ashore in all their might and glory, and marched to rescue the Elves in their first war against Sauron.

In time, the name of New Haven no longer fit, and the city became Lond Daer Enedh, the Great Middle Haven, for it was located between the southern havens of Pelargir and Umbar, and the northern Elf-havens in the Gulf of Lune. With the establishment of Tharbad, and the deforestation of Minhiriath and Enedwaith, the importance of the Middle Haven declined, and the harbour was no longer thronged with a forest of tall masts, but always the banner of the King of the West fluttered above its topless towers.

But the line of kings grew corrupt, until Ar-Pharazôn the Golden took the throne, and in his overweening pride and madness he made war upon the Undying Lands, and the world was changed. Elendil and his sons — the Faithful — escaped the wreck of Númenor, and established new kingdoms in the north and south. Lond Daer became part of Arnor, but the building of the Road and the loss of traffic west over the now-bent sea meant that the importance of the port swiftly declined, and the damage wrought on the harbour by the storms and tidal waves of the Downfall was never wholly repaired.

## Decline and Resurgence

By the early Third Age, Lond Daer was all but empty. It had a reputation as a town of sorcerers and astrologers, of half-mad old men looking for portents or scheming to find the straight road west. Enemies of the king gathered there, and strange ships from distant lands under the Shadow sometimes visited the port. The haven survived another few centuries, but in time it was wholly abandoned. The lesser buildings and works of mortal Men crumbled, broken by time and the lash of wind and wave. Only the great structures of old Númenórean craft survived, and even they were partially lost beneath sand-dune and sea-weed.

The ruins of Lond Daer remained silent and empty. Then, slowly, people returned, and a new settlement arose, built atop the ruins of the old. Some were the descendants of folk who had dwelt along the coast since time immemorial; others



*The Queen's Hall*

*The Greyflood*



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were relative newcomers, who fled west or down the river fleeing the rising Shadow and the growing threat of Orcs. In recent times, many more came fleeing down the Greyflood, escaping the ruin of Tharbad.

All gathered here, at the edge of Middle-earth, to make a new beginning. There had been no law south of the Brandywine in many centuries, but it began to stir again in Lond Daer.

For many long years, Lond Daer was ruled by a council of elders and wealthy citizens. Ten years ago, a gigantic sea serpent swam into the harbour and preyed upon both fish and fishermen. The town sent forth a call for heroes, and heroes came — hunters and adventurers, warriors and mighty-thewed swordsmen. The serpent devoured most of them, and sent the survivors fleeing for dry land.

It took a young woman named Nimue who picked mussels and shellfish on the rocks to defeat the serpent. She discovered the creature had made its lair in the half-flooded ruins of the ancient fortress at the mouth of the harbour. She swam into the ruins to find the beast's nest, only to be trapped in the tunnels when the serpent returned. By fortunate chance, she found an ancient spear forged in Westernesse in the ruins, and slew the monster. The townsfolk acclaimed her queen of Lond Daer, and she rules there to this day.

## The Western Haven

Slowly, year by year, generation by generation, Lond Daer is becoming a town, perhaps even one day a city, the seed of a new kingdom. For the moment, it is a fortified village, rising further inland than the old Númenórean city — flooding and subsidence drowned much of the old town, and when the water is clear, the streets and ruins of the older city can still be seen beneath the waters of the Firth. Its inhabitants call it the 'Western Haven', not recalling the name it once had.

The main part of the settlement clusters along the southern side of the Firth, and is surrounded on two sides by a bank of earth topped with a wall of broken stone, mined from the old Númenórean fortifications. A single gate faces east, flanked by two wooden watchtowers, guarding the settlement from attacks by foes in Eryn Vorn or by barbaric tribesmen along the coast.

The inhabitants of the Western Haven find their sustenance by fishing and farming, especially fishing. That's why within its walls, the town smells mostly of fish — fish drying on racks, frying in pans, fish flopping on the sand, gulls waiting to snatch discarded fish guts. The fishing boats wait at the dockside, guarded by the artificial reefs and shoals of the drowned city below. Only those who know the harbour well can navigate the channels of the flooded streets and safely reach the open sea.

On a little mound is the Queen's Hall, a wooden longhouse that incorporates the ruins of a villa, ancient beyond the reckoning of its current inhabitants, so while the walls may be of wood and mud, the floor is a magnificent mosaic studded with semi-precious stones. This hall is courthouse and alehouse and guesthouse, the heart of life in the Western Haven. The skull of the sea serpent slain by the Queen hangs above her throne — a better symbol of her right to rule than any crown or circlet (see page 79 for more on the Queen's Hall).

Nearly as grand is the House of Johan Fleet, the wealthiest man in Lond Daer and the chief of the traders. He is the grandson of the former Master of Tharbad, and his fortune is founded on coffers of silver stolen from that city.

Other than these two large houses, the rest of the settlement is more humble. Yet, the cottages of the town are made of good stone, quarried in part from the old ruins. Ships infrequently sail as far north as the shores of Harlindon, where they trade with the Dwarves, so the people of the town have good tools to work with, and good weapons to fight with should danger come upon them, or sail south and make the perilous rounding of the cape of Andrast to barter with the folk of western Gondor along the Langstrand.

There is a sense of purpose in the Western Haven, a feeling of hope that better days are coming.

## Lond Daer of Old

Most of the old city can only be seen at low tide, when the waters recede and the weed-garlanded remnants of the drowned ruins appear like ghosts. The folk of present-day Lond Daer believe that it is good to live so close to a city made by the kings of old, and it is common for people to dream of walking the streets of the former haven. These 'sea-dreams' are said to bring good luck — although some tales tell of men who were found drowned on dry land, their beds drenched with sea-water in an otherwise dry room, killed by dreams becoming too real.

The massive ramparts of an old fortress, the Sea Tower, remain above sea level even at high tide. This was once the mighty tower of Tarasyava that guarded the entrance to the haven. Parts of this fortress can still be entered, although most of the internal chambers are choked with silt, and explorers risk being drowned by rising waters. There are said to be undiscovered treasures dating back to the ancient days in the watery darkness of the Sea Tower, and it was here that the sea serpent nested before Queen Nimue slew it. The creature's skull is in the Queen's House, but the rest of its bones lie here.



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Other bones can be found here too — in ages past, a tribe dwelt here in the ruins of the old haven, and used this Númenórean fortress as their temple where they made offerings to the sea. They believed that the powers of the ocean could be pleased with human sacrifice, and they left prisoners to drown in the flooded chambers of the fortress.

On the northern shore, opposite the present town, stand the remains of five towers, closely clustered, giving them a disturbing resemblance to the hand of a giant buried in the sand. These are known as the Towers of the Stargazers, for they were built by astrologers, in the dark, declining years of Lond Daer, when all that remained here were bitter old men who craved the knowledge of drowned Númenor, and who practised strange rites atop their tall towers. All the entrances to the towers were bricked up long ago (some, it seems, from the inside), but there are hidden ways in and out through gaps.



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# The Dwarf-halls of Harmelt

*Dwarves dwelt, and still dwell, in the east side of the Blue Mountains, especially in those parts south of the Gulf of Lune, where they have mines that are still in use.*

Dwarves have delved beneath the Blue Mountains since they first awoke, and their oldest halls here are almost as ancient as fabled Moria. Once, they found gold, iron and gemstones in abundance beneath these mountains, and built the cities of Nogrod and Belegost. Since the First Age, these mountains have been both a refuge and a source of wealth for the Dwarves. In a changing world beset by many sorrows and dangers, it was a source of great comfort to the Dwarves that one thing could always be relied on. The seas might drown the cities of the west, the kingdoms of Men might rise and fall, and the Shadow in the east might draw ever closer — but the mines of the Blue Mountains would never fail.

They were half right. Since the restoration of the Kingdom of Erebor, the iron mines in the northern spur of the Blue Mountains have been mostly abandoned, and the gold mines of the south appear close to being all but exhausted. The Dwarves of Harlindon dig ever deeper in search of new veins of gold, but their efforts are becoming less fruitful with each passing year.

What is a Dwarf-hold without a source of wealth? Dwarves need to create, to make new things and build upon the works of their ancestors. Without such an outlet for their craft, they fall into bitterness and hatred. The Dwarves of Harlindon are on the edge of such a precipice. A darkness grows in their hearts, and they fear that they will be the last generation to dwell here, that they will be the ones who fail the line of ancestors stretching back to elder days.

## Visiting the Halls

The Halls of Harmelt lie at the southern end of the mountain range, atop a hill called the Stone of Fire (named not because of any volcanic qualities, but because the sun setting behind the forested mound gives the impression that the hill is on fire). The top of the hill has been hollowed out in a deep, wide bowl, and it is in this great cup of stone that the Dwarves have their halls. The open area is used for meetings and feasts in summer; a still pool in the centre of the bowl echoes the water of the sacred Mirrormere in Dimrill Dale.

Once, a Dwarf-road led through the forests and wound around the hill seven times before it reached the lip of the bowl, but the lands beyond Harlindon became unfriendly, and the Dwarves allowed the road to vanish beneath the undergrowth. Now, secret paths known only to friends of the Dwarves lead through the thick forests to the Stone of Fire, and seven gatehouses and guard towers watch the road that leads up the hill.

### The Hall of Golden Walls

The lord of Harmelt dwells in this glorious hall, where every single thing gleams with a golden light. Of gold are made the cups and plates; upon the walls are panels of beaten gold, and golden sunlight pours through windows of polished crystal by day, and lamps blaze by night… In truth, one can judge the fortunes of Harmelt by the thickness of the gold — the stems of the golden goblets have been shaved thin indeed, and the panels on the walls are mere gold paint now. But it is still a wonder to look upon.

All golden, too, is Lord Mjolin, the master of Harmelt. He is the second eldest of seven brothers, and four of his siblings sit beside him at the high table. (The seventh brother, the eldest, went off seeking adventure in the Misty Mountains and never returned). Lord Mjolin keeps a tight grip on power — every office and station of note in Harmelt is held by one of his brothers or another close relative, so the weakness of the clan can be kept secret.

A pair of magic doors guards the Hall of Golden Walls. These doors are made of stone, inlaid with golden runes. A word of command from the lord of the hall causes the doors to close and lock. A tradition in Harmelt holds that if the doors are sealed when there is only a single individual alone in the hall, a terrible death will come for that lone fool.

### The Mines of Harmelt

The once-fruitful mines of Harmelt still yield useful amounts of tin and copper, but only scant traces of gold. The Dwarves have taken to salting the mines with gold nuggets when travellers visit them, to "prove" that the mines are still viable. If the root of Harmelt's wealth is known to be rotten, the Dwarf-hold is doomed to fade, abandoned one by one by the Dwarves who dwell there.



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## *Lord Mjolin, Master of Harmelt*

There can be no greater shame than to be the last of a great line, to know that you are the one who broke the chain, who failed where all those before you succeeded. The tragedy of Mjolin is that this failure is not his fault. He is not lacking in courage or skill or wit. It is the mountain that has failed him — the spring of his family's wealth has run dry. Without gold, Harmelt will dwindle, and the family lose its place of prestige among the Dwarves of the Ered Luin.

Now, Mjolin must find a way to forge a new chain, to chart a new path for Harmelt. He is a Dwarf adrift; he wishes he could follow the path of his elder brother and go a-wandering, instead of being tethered to his responsibilities here in the Hall of Golden Walls. He conceals his doubts behind a stern Dwarven brow; he is the Lord of Harmelt, and can admit no weakness or hesitancy. Privately, he's desperately seeking a way forward, and will harken to any counsel, however unwise, that offers him a path out of his distress.

**OCCUPATION:** Lord of the Dwarf-hold

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Stern

## *Hjolin, Dwarven Lore-master*

The middle brother of the seven, Hjolin is the only one to not hold a seat at the high table. It was offered to him, and he rejected it, for his mind is consumed with his work. Hjolin is obsessed with the forgotten lore of the Dwarves, with secrets of metalworking and rune-scribing that were lost with the fall of Moria. He is convinced that he can uncover some secret that will restore the fortunes of Harmelt, but his obsession consumes him, and his brothers worry that he has lost his mind in the labyrinth of old books and smoking vials of foul liquid he's built for himself in a disused gallery of the mine. He comes and goes, vanishing from Harmelt for months at a time, returning in the dead of night, his fingernails encrusted with barrow-dirt or the dust of long-sealed tombs and towers outside Lond Daer.

**OCCUPATION:** Smith, Rune-scribe

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Eccentric

### THE DRAGONTOWER

There is an eighth tower, of much newer construction than the rest. This tower was built after the Kingdom of Erebor was conquered by Smaug, and the Dwarves of the Ered Luin feared that this calamity heralded a new plague of fire-drakes. At the top of the Dragontower is a warning bell, to be rung by the sentry if a Dragon is seen, and in the tower is a sword made long long ago (by one of the apprentices of Telchar, or so the legends say), wound around with runes of Dragon-slaying.



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# RUINS OF CARDOLAN

*The brief glow fell upon a huge sitting figure, still and solemn as the great stone kings of Argonath. The years had gnawed it, and violent hands had maimed it…*

Cardolan's history, from founding to destruction, is regrettably brief. The sons of the last High King of Arnor quarrelled, and the north-kingdom was divided between them, making three new kingdoms — Arthedain in the north, Rhudaur in the east, and Cardolan in the south. There was much strife between the kingdoms, especially over the claim on the Weather Hills, and while the kings of Cardolan fought, they were ever wary of the wastes of Enedwaith across the river, where many sullen foes yet dwelt in the hills and wild places.

After some five hundred years, Rhudaur fell into darkness and allied with a shadow out of the land of Angmar, and both Cardolan and Arthedain were assaulted. The Dúnedain of Cardolan repaired to the region that today is called the Barrow-downs and held out for a time, but the land was ravaged. Plague followed, the terrible Great Plague that killed four out of every five in some parts of the failing kingdom.

Historians still debate exactly when Cardolan ended; there was no single decisive catastrophe, just a juddering decline until nothing remained save a few survivors clustered around Tharbad and along the border with Arthedain. The last prince of Cardolan likely perished around 1409, but a succession of stewards, warlords and seneschals continued to rule for more than a century after.

Still, for a few centuries, there was a king in Minhiriath, and that has not been wholly forgotten.

## TOWERS AND STRONGHOLDS

In the years before the fall of Cardolan, the lords of that land built a great many fortresses and watchtowers along its borders, especially on its northern hilltops and along the banks of the river Hoarwell. Some of these fortifications survive, lonely sentinels long blind. Others have become homes; old walls still have strength, and it's not uncommon to find a small hamlet or farmstead at the foot of a hill, with the old tower used as a place of refuge or a storehouse. Many are now Troll-holes, where monsters shelter from the sunlight.

Some among these towers are similar to the great watchtower at Amon Sûl, and while the survivors cannot claim the nobility of their builders, at least they still stand. Typically, the towers are five or six stories tall, with the entrance some six or ten feet above the ground, accessible by an external wooden stair or ladder. The topmost level may be open to the sky and stars, or the tower may be topped with a conical roof. Some towers held jewels of glass or crystal, made in likeness of the Palantíri — whether these reproductions were placed here to fool the Enemy regarding the whereabouts of the real Seeing Stones or for some other purpose not even the Wise know.

Other ruins of Cardolan are not so obvious to the eye. Mines in the South Downs are still in use, and the long grass hides the remains of ancient villas and manors in the wilds of Minhiriath. Legacies of



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### THE BARROW PEOPLE

It is told that in their last days, the lords of Cardolan found refuge in the hills to the east of the Old Forest, amid the Barrow-downs. When the plague ravaged the land, some among them burnt their houses in desperation, and took shelter in the houses of the ancient dead. Many travellers journeying along the Greenway and entering the narrow gorge known by the name of Andrath, swear to have seen the descendants of that folk, still living among the crumbling barrows.

These barrow-dwellers are pale, grey and gaunt, looking more dead than alive. They have forgotten the tongues they once knew, and speak only the language of the dead. They worship the corpses of kings upon the slab, and though they wear only rags, they fight with swords of ancient design. They see other living beings as monsters, as horrible in their eyes as a Wight or Wraith.

the vanished days of glory appear suddenly, carven stones peering from the undergrowth, or a stone bridge arching over a little stream, trailing green creepers into the babbling water. Such places retain a little of the strength and power of the kingdoms of old; when standing against the servants of Shadow, it is good to fight in a place where others resisted against the same darkness, long ago. Oft, weapons slumbering in mounds or hidden treasuries show themselves when they are needed most sorely.

### GHOSTS OF THE PLAGUE YEARS

Not every memory of old Cardolan is welcome. In the last days of the kingdom, when plague stalked the land, the survivors despaired, and in their grief, some rejected the Powers of the West and instead succumbed to apocalyptic cults preached by strange prophets out of Angmar. They turned to the worship of Morgoth Bauglir, begging him to save them from the plague. The ghosts of these worshippers linger yet amid the ruins of their homes, where they perished with a prayer to the Enemy yet on their lips.

## Wyncross

The ruins of Wyncross lie a few days south of Bree, at the crossroads where the road to Sarn Ford breaks from the Greenway. The Great Plague put an end to the town, although a few families lived among the ruins for centuries after, their numbers dwindling with each generation. The last of them moved to Bree, and now Wyncross is lonely and mostly empty. Travellers on the road often encamp here — as do Elves of the Wandering Companies, for this was once a merry town. In days of old when the land now called the Shire was the king's vineyards, this was Wine-cross, the wine-market of the north.

# Eryn Vorn

*Tom's words laid bare the hearts of trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers.*

Once, there was only forest, a great dark wood stretching from sea to mountains, a forest far larger than little Mirkwood. Shepherds of trees walked there, and the trees harkened to their slow songs. Later, much later, Men came and dwelt here too, wood-goers hiding in the shadows from a greater, colder shadow in the North.

All this was long ago, so long ago that the shepherds fell asleep. They vanished in the east, or drowned in the west with their beloved willow-meadows.

More Men came, tall Men from the sea, bearing bright axes. They cut down the forest, chopping down the eldest of trees for timber. The forest shrank, like waters receding after a flood, like the sea retreating with the tide. Each year, more trees were cut down, and those that were left grew bitter. The wood-goers made war on the invaders, but stone-tipped spears and knives of bone were no match for steel harness forged in Númenor.

Now, that once vast forest is gone, leaving only a few dark remnants. The forest of Fangorn beyond the gap of Rohan is by far the largest of these. Better known in Eriador is the Old Forest between the Bree-land and the Shire.

A third such remnant is the forested cape of Eryn Vorn. These woods were impenetrably dark and tangled even in the days of Númenor, and there have been several thousand years of twisted, cankerous growth since. Huge trees grow there, monstrous giants; no axe has ever sounded in these woods, not even one wielded by the hand of Dwarf or Dúnadan — for these



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woods are inhabited. The wood-goers that dwell in the darkness of the cape are savage wild Men, descendants of those who hid from the Númenórean mariners as they sailed up the River Greyflood. Whatever they once were, they have been changed by long ages of isolation and hatred of the outside world.

They are the Tree Men of Eryn Vorn.

### The Tree Men

The wood-goers dwelling in Eryn Vorn smear their bodies with leaf-mould and mud, and use branches and leaves to disguise themselves, so they blend into the forest. They have mastered stillness, and can hold one position for hours or even days, freezing in place, so still they scarcely breathe. They are so adept at camouflage that the folk of Lond Daer hold that they are half-tree, and that in the winter they freeze in place as leafless saplings, their limbs twisted and blown by the constant wind from the sea. The Tree Men hate and despise all outsiders; not only do they hunt anyone who enters the wood of Eryn Vorn, but they sometimes raid outside their territory, and that is a terrifying sight indeed — a whole wood apparently springing up overnight around some isolated farmstead, bright eyes gleaming amid the bark and leaves. They have forgotten how to speak in the tongues of Men, and have their own language of bird-calls and creaking noises like branches swaying in the wind.

They take prisoners when they can. They bring these prisoners back to the dark woods, and hang them from certain old trees deep in the forest. They cut the prisoners' flesh, so the blood drains into the soil. Tree-roots drink deep, and the old trees awaken and speak, whispering root-speech and secrets from the Elder Days. Sometimes, with enough blood to warm their sap, these old trees even get up and walk.

### The Barrow of Eryn Vorn

At the end of the cape, beyond the forest, is a steep-sided headland. Gulls nest there in profusion. The cliffs appear unclimbable from the seaward side, although there may be paths out of the forest that the Tree Men use when hunting birds. Atop the headland is a burial mound, marked by a pillar of black stone. The Númenórean mariners saw the mound when they first sailed to Middle-earth, so the mound must have been raised in the Elder Days by some Elf-lord or Dwarf-king of Beleriand. The only way to reach the barrow is to travel through the dark forest of Eryn Vorn, so whatever treasures or secrets are buried there may remain undisturbed until doomsday.

## The Lone-lands of Minhiriath

*In those days no other Men had settled dwellings so far west, or within a hundred leagues of the Shire.*

To most, the Lone-lands of Minhiriath appear utterly deserted. A traveller could wander the region for months and not see another living soul. The wars and plagues of more than a thousand years ago erased the largest communities and buried the remnants of the old kingdoms.

Those who survived did so by hiding, by isolating themselves. The folk who still live here dwell in fortified hamlets, in farmsteads many days walk from any neighbour, or as nomads, hunting in the wilderness and living off the land. In many ways, Tom Bombadil is a more typical denizen of Eriador than, say, the innkeeper of Bree — there are more isolated farmsteads than villages in these ruined lands (although of course Tom is a thing unto himself, and the surly, suspicious farmers of the north are quite unlikely to break into spontaneous verse, nor do they wear bright yellow boots.)

The Rangers guard these hamlets and farmsteads, as they protect Bree and the Shire.

### Hynda's House at Wormhill

Hynda's farmstead is typical of the settlements that survive in Minhiriath in the last days of the Third Age. It's a house in a sheltered fold of the land, guarded by a low wall of stone, at the foot of a mound called Wormhill. Hynda and her kinfolk farm the area, growing vegetables and grain, and supplement their diet with meat from hunting. She remembers a few vestiges of the culture of the old kingdoms — Hynda can read well enough, and has passed the trick on to her cleverer grandchildren. There are a few books in her house, as well as a carven icon of a king of old salvaged from a ruined town. She eats off plates of tin or chipped porcelain, and her kettle bubbles above a fire that burns in an elegant wrought-iron grate. She prides herself on being civilised and lawful, observing the traditions of the north instead of being a wild barbarian like the Fisher-folk or worse, the Tree Men of Eryn Vorn. However, her little farmstead is far from being self-sufficient — she relies on Dwarven smiths to mend her tools



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and pots and pans, and every year something irreplaceable is lost or breaks, never to be made whole again.

The old traditions urge Hynda to be hospitable to strangers, to keep the king's peace, and to look to the West instead of the Shadow in the East — but she must balance these traditions against a lifetime of bitter experience. Strangers may bring plague or be thieves, the only law in the land these days is the law of the sword, no aid or hope comes out of the west, and the old tales say all the seas are bent. If a traveller can convince Hynda Greengrass that they are of good character and worthy of trust, then she offers shelter and a good supper beneath her roof. Otherwise… well, there's a midden-pit over the hill that holds more than household waste.

### *Hynda Greengrass*

**OCCUPATION:** Mistress of Hynda's House

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Suspicious

## The Fisher-folk of the Shore

The coastline between Lond Daer and the haunted cape of Eryn Vorn is well populated in comparison to the rest of Minhiriath. This land is home to tribes of Fisher-folk. They are a wild folk, half-way between the inhabitants of Tharbad and the cruel Tree Men who have known only darkness. They migrate up and down the coast, travelling by boat as far north as Forlindon (or even, rarely, Forochel, for they are distant kin to the ice-folk who live in that harsh land), and as far south as the mouth of the river Isen, following sea-birds and shoals of fish. They build no villages, but erect temporary shelters of dried seaweed and driftwood, or take refuge in sea-caves or among the ruins of crumbling fortresses that were made to guard against attacks from the sea. Their boats are small but seaworthy, made of hide stretched over wooden frames.

The ancestors of the Fisher-folk were driven out of the forest by the forces of Númenor, and they remember old grudges and old terrors. Even though they are akin to some of the folk of Lond Daer, they dislike the growing settlement, fearing that the warriors of the haven will come to dominate the shore and drive them into the wilds.

It is to the credit of the Fisher-folk that they have never succumbed to the Shadow. Partly, this is because their lands lie far from Mordor, but also, they have a strange understanding with the spirits that dwell in the deep ocean. The Fisher-folk, it is said, can call up winds and storms with a song, and some among them are rumoured to be skin-changers, able to take on the form of bird or fish.

### THE HUNGRY ONE

The Fisher-folk know of a singular peril that waits in the deep waters off the coast of Middle-earth. They call it the Hungry One, though in truth they do not know if it is a single creature or a host. It resembles a great tangle of seaweed, all entangled and riding on the waves, a floating island large enough to carry a whole town. Strands and tendrils of foul slime thread through this great body of weed and hold it together, as if that huge raft were a woven cloak for some underwater giant. The Hungry One hides in the waters, sinking deep during the day, emerging only at night, as if it fears the light of the West. The Fisher-folk make offerings to it, weighing captives down with stones and sinking them in places where the Hungry One lurks.

Sometimes, a curious madness seizes one of the Fisher-folk; they call this the breath of the Hungry One. The victim is compelled to go east, up into the mountains, and seek out the place called Moria. It is as though the Hungry One calls to some kindred spirit of evil in the mountains.

### THE SINGER ON THE SHORE

The Fisher-folk know another secret; a strange fellow wanders the hither shore of Middle-earth, all alone. They call him the Singer, for though he rarely raises his voice to song, when he does it is a wonder. Potent are his songs; he can raise or quell storms, or call fish or even unquiet spirits from the deeps. It's said even the Hungry One fears the Singer. Some tales say he is an Elf; others claim he is a spirit himself. The Singer knows the shore better than any living man, and can disappear at will. His footprints or the echoes of his songs are encountered far more often than the Singer himself; his songs are so beautiful that the rocks of the shore cling to them, and they echo far longer than other sounds.



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The true Tale of Years for Eriador is unwritten. The history recorded in the Red Book of Westmarch does not relate precisely what became of Lond Daer, or Tharbad, or the folk living along the coasts. The histories tell only that the King returned in 3019, and brought better days to this benighted region — but there may be many unfinished or lost tales that tell what happened in the lone-lands in the many decades before the War of the Ring.

The present chapter describes threats looming over the coming years in Southern Eriador — outside forces and spies that have recently entered the region, or potential internal conflicts that will soon come to the fore. These include the schemes of major players like the Black Númenóreans and the White Hand of Saruman, the actions of Raiders from Dunland, and more.

Each threat description includes a number of potential strokes — events or undertakings that will advance that threat's agenda. They are listed under the *Dark Designs* headings in each section, in a chronological 'Tale of Years' format. The Loremaster should take these entries into consideration to weave them into a Company's Adventuring Phases or Fellowship Phases (as Rumours, for example), building on the suggestions presented and evaluating how the deeds of



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### CONTRADICTIONS?

Adopting a flexible approach to the unfolding of events in a campaign may lead to contradictions, as far as the published material is concerned. For example, on page 39, the timeline for the Black Númenóreans states that Lond Daer is attacked and destroyed by them. On page 48, it's the Dunlendings. Which one is correct?

The answer is that it's up to what happens on your table. All these plots and factions are optional – use whichever ones fit your campaign, and don't try to cram all of them in. If your players are having fun fighting Dunlendings, then saving Lond Daer from their attack makes for a fantastic adventure. If your players are more the sort to investigate sinister mysteries, then the Black Númenórean plotline is a better fit. (And if your players are off conspiring in Tharbad or playing outlaws in Swanfleet, then it doesn't matter who destroys Lond Daer.)

the Player-heroes may affect them — by taking action against these strokes during an Adventuring Phase, the Company can prevent that danger from growing.

Not every dark design must be incorporated into a campaign. Many tales outlined in this chapter can remain possibilities, mere shadows of a bitter fate. Some playing groups will ignore some of them altogether, while others may be incorporated as news from far-off corners of the land — if a campaign is about adventures amid the Barrow-downs, then the fate of the fisher queen in Lond Daer is a topic for nothing more than fireside tales.

Descriptions for several key Loremaster characters are included, complete with gaming stats if an individual is likely to become an adversary to the Player-heroes.

# The Black Númenóreans

*"This only would he say, that Imladris was of old the name among the Elves of a far northern dale, where Elrond the Halfelven dwelt, greatest of lore-masters."*

The Enemy is moving.

The time is not yet right for his great assault on the lands of the Free Folk. He gathers his armies in Mordor and in the East, preparing to sweep across the Great River and crush the last outpost of Númenor at Minas Tirith. With his dark arts and his agents, he calls up the Orcs of the Misty Mountains, readying them to swarm from their noisome holes to overwhelm Wilderland. At Dol Guldur, he prepares a host to strike at the Elven stronghold of Lothlórien. One day soon, the hammer-blow will fall on Erebor and Dale too, snuffing out the brief candle of hope that was lit with the death of the Dragon. Sauron plans to bring final war to the lands east of the Misty Mountains.

The West, though — here, his designs must be different.

Partly, this is because his evil work is already done here. Sauron has defeated most of the foes that might have challenged him in Eriador. The Ring-smiths of Eregion are gone; even though he lacks the Ruling Ring, he has gathered to him the Nine and what remains of the Seven. (As for the Three, the war will either force the keepers of those rings to step forth to oppose him, or to flee West — either way, the power to defeat him is not in the Three Rings.) Gil-galad is dead, and Elendil is dead, and their kingdoms are gone. Sauron shattered the North-kingdom through his servants in Angmar, and there are no Men in the North with any strength to stand against him. The Dwarves he can enslave or bargain with, especially as Moria is his to trade. No, as far as Sauron's military plans are concerned, Eriador is an afterthought, a battle fought and won more than a thousand years ago. There will be no great invasion of Eriador, for there is nothing left to invade or destroy — with two exceptions.

He has a plan for the Grey Havens. One of Sauron's secret fears is that his enemies might find the One Ring and deny it to him forever by taking it West over sea, where he cannot follow — or, even worse, travel there and persuade the Valar to intercede again, as they did at the end of the First Age. Therefore, Sauron intends to blockade the Havens. Corsairs from Umbar will sail north, carried swiftly on hot, foul winds out of Harad, and stop the Elven ships from crossing the sea. At the same time, he will send Orcs and Evil Men out of



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Angmar to lay waste to Lindon. Here, Sauron's hatred is at odds with his cold ambition; the longer he leaves the Havens open as an escape route, the more tempted the last Elves will be to abandon Middle-earth to his shadow and sail away, but Sauron desires to destroy and dominate all the Firstborn.

The other exception, and the one that torments Sauron like a thorn in his side, is the hidden valley of Imladris where Elrond dwells. It was Elrond's father who pleaded before the Valar; it was Elrond's friend and liege-lord who led the Last Alliance in the last war. Sauron's forces tried to besiege the refuge of Rivendell in the War of the Elves and Sauron, but that was thousands of years ago. Since then, all the lands have changed, and the valley is hidden even from the Eye. Rivendell must be destroyed and Elrond slain before Sauron can have complete victory.

Enter the Black Númenóreans.

These are the descendants of Dúnedain who fell under the Shadow. Many have fallen in this manner; the servants of Ar-Pharazôn, rulers of lesser realms in the south, sorcerers and astrologers who sought forbidden knowledge in the darkness, jealous princes who quarrelled with the Kings of Gondor. Even those of Westernesse who have risen high and accrued many blessings and honours may turn their face from the light and bow to the Dark Lord on his Dark Throne.

## The Mission to Eriador

In the year 2965 of the Third Age, a ship sets sail from the havens of Umbar. On board is a band of Black Númenóreans, led by the warlord Zoril and the sorcerer Usapthon, sent on a mission by Sauron himself. It has been many centuries since a ship of Umbar sailed so far north, into the chilly regions beyond the Cape of Andrast. The task set to Zoril and Usapthon by the Dark Lord is twofold.

First and foremost, they are to locate the hidden valley of Imladris, so that when the time comes, Sauron's forces can lay siege to the haven and destroy it. They know that Imladris is somewhere on the upper courses of the River Bruinen, and that the Bruinen flows into the Greyflood, but they have no knowledge beyond that. The spies are to draw maps of the region, and find a route that a host of Orcs can easily follow.

Second, they are to establish a network of spies and informants in the north who will report back to Sauron on the comings and goings of the Elves, especially in the Grey Havens. As no Elf would ever serve the Shadow, even unwittingly, these informants will be Men and Dwarves.

When the war is done and Sauron is the undisputed god-king of Middle-earth, and all living things are under the Shadow, then he has promised that the kingdom of the hated Faithful of Elendil will be restored under the rule of the Black Númenóreans. Therefore, they have a third mission, beyond the charges laid upon them by Barad-dûr — they intend to survey the lands that will surely be theirs when all is done, find out what treasures and riches may be found there, and decide who will be spared and who will be slaughtered in the new ordering of the world to come.

## The Ship Kathuphazgân

The Black Númenóreans sailed out of Umbar in the galleon *Kathuphazgân*. This mighty vessel is like a fortress under sail — a ship of such size has not been seen in northern seas for hundreds of years, but the shipyards of Umbar have all the resources of Harad and the lands beyond to plunder. Of black teak are her timbers made, and ivory her fittings. She sails under vast black sails like thunderclouds. For secrecy's sake, she does not fly the sails marked with the Eye, but her provenance is undeniable — only the Corsairs of Umbar could build and sail such a massive vessel.

To stay hidden, the *Kathuphazgân* rests at anchor at hidden coves and inlets along the coast between the mouths of the Greyflood and the Isen, in spots where she can remain unseen by passing fishermen or Elven wanderers. From this floating castle, Zoril and Usapthon send their agents ashore.

In addition to the two leaders of the expedition, the *Kathuphazgân* carries a crew of some five hundred — three hundred sailors and rowing-slaves, fifty servants, officers and priests, and another hundred and fifty warriors. Such a huge crew requires a great deal of supplies, and while she is as well provisioned as can be, the *Kathuphazgân* must return to Umbar every few months to restock. On board, she carries engines of war: windlasses and catapults, sealed jars of devilry, swords and armour to outfit a savage host — but her purpose is spying and secrecy, not conquest. Therefore, *Kathuphazgân's* primary weapon is a treasury brimming with gold, jewels, and precious rings, enough to sway the strongest heart with a bribe. The two leaders of the expedition mistrust each other, and the treasure vault is sealed with a cunning lock that requires two keys to open.

Usapthon, in particular, is steeped in sorcery, and the *Kathuphazgân* is outfitted with laboratories, temples and ritual chambers for the practice of dark arts. Another room, at the heart of the ship, is the map room, where the progress of the expedition may be tracked, and the discoveries of the Black Númenóreans compared against copies of ancient maps preserved in Umbar.

## Key Foes

The crew of the *Kathuphazgân* and their leaders will probably be the most formidable foes the Player-heroes end up facing in Eriador.



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## Zoril

Zoril might easily be mistaken for one of the Dúnedain of old; in her, the blood of Númenor is strong, giving her the long limbs and lordly height of that folk. She was a reaver and an adventurer in the south for long years, wandering under strange stars as a freebooter, before she returned home to Umbar. Zoril believes that she can be the queen of the North-kingdom if she proves herself in the sight of the Eye, but she also knows that Sauron has the spider-like patience of the immortals, while Zoril herself is a mere mortal. She's therefore determined to find a way to accelerate her plans. Sometimes, she contemplates using the resources of the *Kathuphazgân* to set herself up as a warlord, as the new queen of Angmar. At other times, she wonders if attacking the Grey Havens would provoke the Elves to act, and spark conflict between the Free Folk and the Shadow.

Zoril is immensely arrogant, and she has good cause to be — she is a master swordswoman and explorer, the equal of any Man who lives in this age of the world. She wields the blade Magolach, a sword made in the forges of Mount Doom by the smiths of Minas Morgul, and she has yet to meet a weapon that can withstand it. Indeed, this whole 'scouting' mission is a waste of Zoril's talents (in her eyes, at least) — with another few hundred men and a few more ships, she could conquer all the North and sweep the remaining Elves away!

If the Player-heroes disrupt the plans of the Black Númenóreans, Zoril will lead the hunt for the insolent meddlers...

**ZORIL**
Proud, Wilful

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 7

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 2 | 7 | +4 | 4 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** The Blade Magolach 4 (6/18, *Fiery Blow* — see box), Great Bow 3 (4/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fearless.* This creature's Might is considered 1 higher for the purpose of resisting the Intimidate Foe combat task.

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

*Yell of Triumph.* Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate or Resolve to all allies in the fight.

### THE BLADE MAGOLACH

By the arts of the enemy, Magolach retains the heat of its forging; when drawn, the blade becomes searing hot to the touch. Zoril carries a scabbard lined with a curious cloth from the south that does not burn, so the weapon can be sheathed safely. This long sword grants the *Fiery Blow* special damage option:

- **FIERY BLOW:** The attack burns the target, inflicting a severe Endurance loss from fire damage (see page 134 of *The One Ring*).

## Usapthon

Of old, the Black Númenóreans studied the arts of the Enemy, and learned sorcery under the tutelage of Sauron. During the long centuries after the Enemy's defeat at the hands of the Last Alliance, knowledge of sorcery was preserved by secret cults and schools. Usapthon was trained in such a school; she was raised in underground catacombs and did not see sunlight until she was nine years old, so that she was consecrated to Shadow. Her mother tongue is the Black Speech of Mordor, and she was taught to read by studying crumbling scrolls of magic. At fifteen, she was sent to the far east, to lands long under the Enemy's sway, to be a priestess in one of the huge stepped temples where offerings are given to Morgoth in terrible rites. From there, she was brought in a ceremonial procession of oliphaunts to the dread land of Mordor, and instructed in the ways of sorcery by the acolytes of Sauron himself, the Dark Lord returned.

Now, she's been sent to Eriador — and for Usapthon, this land is stranger than any she has known before. The sorceress has lived her whole life in temples and cult strongholds, isolated from the lives of ordinary folk. For her, a dark tower tended by eyeless, tongueless servants is unremarkable and quotidian, while the little fishing villages and farmsteads of Minhiriath are strange and eerie. She knows the secret names of the Balrogs that served the Enemy of old, but has never heard even the simplest riddle or song others learn in childhood.

Usapthon will show all these ignorant fools the glory of the One True God.



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**USAPTHON**
Secretive, Unsettling

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 7

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 2 | 7 | +3 | 2 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Club 3 (4/14, Pierce), Dagger 3 (2/12)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Combat Sorcerer.* Usapthon can cast a Dreadful Spell in place of one of her attacks. If she does so, she can cast the spell without spending Hate.

*Denizen of the Dark.* All attack rolls are Favoured while in darkness.

*Dreadful Spells: Lure of Shadow.* Usapthon weaves a web of darkness around her victim. Spend 1 Hate to make one Player-hero gain 3 Shadow points (Sorcery). Targets who fail their Shadow test suffer a Bout of Madness.

*Dreadful Spells: Misfortune.* Usapthon curses her foes with bad luck. Spend 1 Hate to make one Player-hero gain 3 Shadow points (Sorcery). Targets who fail their Shadow test or who are Miserable increase all their Attribute TNs by their Shadow score for the rest of the combat.

*Fearless.* This creature's Might is considered 1 higher for the purpose of resisting the Intimidate Foe combat task.

*Strike Fear.* Spend 1 Hate to make all Player-heroes in sight gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow Test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

## *Captain Nerek*

Old Nerek is a veteran of the Corsairs of Umbar, a raider and reaver of the shores of Middle-earth. He has lost the wild courage of his youth, and now tends towards caution. Preserving his ship and the lives of his crew seems more important to him than some valley of a few ancient Elves, so this mission to Eriador fills him with doubt. He has no desire to sail so close to the Grey Havens; Círdan the Shipwright is a figure out of legend among seafarers, and it is said that he watches over the waters of Lhûn. Nerek looks for any excuse to sail the *Kathuphazgân* to safer waters; given the choice, he'd leave Zoril and Usapthon on the sandy shore and let them complete their mission without endangering his ship further. The war will be fought and won in the Bay of Belfalas and on the Anduin, not up here in these cold, desolate lands.

If pressed, Captain Nerek is a dangerous foe; he's led his crew to victory in many battles.

**NEREK**
Commanding, Seasoned

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 5

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 2 | 5 | +2 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Heavy Scimitar 3 (5/18, Break Shield)

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**FELL ABILITIES:** *Master & Commander*. While Nerek commands his crew, his and their Might counts as 1 higher for the purpose of resisting the Intimidate Foe combat task.

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Resolve to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

*Yell of Triumph.* Spend 1 Resolve to restore 1 Resolve to all allies in the fight.

## The Lord of the Lash

The only Orc on board the *Kathuphazgân* is the slave-master, Lug, called the Lord of the Lash by the slaves. Orcs are not seafarers, and have a natural terror of the open ocean, so Lug stays below on the slave decks and takes his fear out on the unfortunate rowers. He takes any opportunity offered to go ashore, so he can stand on dry land and be away from the cursed water – why, there's nothing between you and the West when you're at sea, and nowhere to hide from the cursed Sun.

Lug's a powerful Orc, at least when on solid ground – he's Mordor-bred and trained, so he's much bigger and stronger than the runts of the Misty Mountains, a true Uruk. He wears heavy armour and a masked helm even when at sea. He'll sink like a stone if he falls overboard, but by the Eye, he'll not face the sea unarmed and unprotected!

**LUG, THE LORD OF THE LASH**
Proud, Wilful

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 24 | 1 | 6 | +3 | 4 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Broad-bladed sword 3 (4/16, Pierce), Bow of Horn 3 (3/14, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Hate Sunlight.* Lug loses 1 Hate for each round he is exposed to the full light of the sun.

*Horrible Strength.* If Lug scored a Piercing Blow with a close combat attack, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

*Yell of Triumph.* Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate or Resolve to all allies in the fight.

## Black Númenórean Spies

Cunning spies, trained to infiltrate and recruit more agents to Sauron's cause.

**BLACK NÚMENÓREAN SPY**
Deceptive, Patient

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 12 | 1 | 3 | – | 1 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Short Sword 3 (3/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Craven*. When affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, the creature also loses 1 Hate.

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.



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## Black Númenórean Sailors

Most of the crew of the *Kathuphazgân* are slaves and will not fight for the Black Númenóreans; the statistics below describe one of the deck crew or guards on board the ship.

**BLACK NÚMENÓREAN SAILOR**
Proud, Superstitious

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 4

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | 1 | 4 | +1 | 2 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Axe 3 (5/18, Break Shield)

**FELL ABILITIES:** None.

## Black Númenórean Soldiers

These warriors are among the best and highest-honoured soldiers amid the Black Númenóreans, the counterparts of Gondor's elite guard of the citadel. There are only a few of these warriors on board, but few in Eriador can match them.

**BLACK NÚMENÓREAN SOLDIER**
Cruel, Disciplined

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 5

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 1 | 5 | +3 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Long Sword 3 (5/16), Great Bow 3 (4/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fearless*. This creature's Might is considered 1 higher for the purpose of resisting the Intimidate Foe combat task.

*Thick Armour.* Spend 1 Hate point to gain (2d) on a Protection roll.

## Dark Designs of The Black Númenóreans

The Black Númenóreans intended to sail up the Greyflood as far as they could, and then send scouts inland along the river to seek the hidden valley, but the existence of the settlement of Lond Daer forced them to change their plans. They must move more slowly now, and with a greater emphasis on corruption and secrecy.

### 2965: STRANGERS IN LOND DAER

Black Númenóreans, disguising themselves as travellers from the south, infiltrate the port of Lond Daer. They claim to be fleeing the growing darkness in Mordor, and ask about hiring guides to lands further north. They are hungry for news — and will pay in gold for word of "Imladris".

### 2966: THE FISHER CHILD

A child from one of the Fisher-folk tribes along the coast spots the *Kathuphazgân* riding at anchor. Guards from the ship pursue the child, who escapes into the wilderness. If the child is not recaptured, the *Kathuphazgân* will have to change anchorage and retreat back south to Umbar to avoid discovery. When the ship returns, Zoril decides that they will need a more secure anchorage, and begins to plan the taking of Lond Daer.

### 2967: DARK BARGAINS

Zoril strikes a bargain with Johan Fleet, a merchant of Lond Daer (see page 83). In exchange for gold from Umbar, Fleet will spy for the Númenóreans and report back to them. They guard his trade caravans as they go up the river to Tharbad, and on to Bree — and thence east to Angmar! (Leads to *Scouts in Minhiriath.*)

### 2968: SCOUTS IN MINHIRIATH

When the *Kathuphazgân* returns from Umbar, many more spies disembark and disguise themselves as caravan guards. Suddenly, it is as though the Black Númenóreans are everywhere in Southern Eriador — exploring the wilderness, prying into old barrows, making bargains with evil men. (Leads to *The Wooing of Tharbad.*)

### 2968: THE TREASURES OF OLD

Black Númenóreans seek treasures and magic left over from the Second Age. Agents in Tharbad report that the scholar and treasure-finder Amelia Kern knows much of such places; Kern is kidnapped and taken downriver to the *Kathuphazgân*, where Usapthon can question her and feed upon her knowledge.



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### 2969: JOURNEY TO ANGMAR

Seeking sorcerous relics, Usapthon makes a long pilgrimage to the haunted land of Angmar. There, she tries to awaken dark powers and evil spirits that have slumbered since the defeat of the Witch-king in 1975 T.A. (Leads to *Rites in the Barrow-downs*.)

### 2970: THE WOOING OF THARBAD

Zoril allies herself with one of the major characters in Tharbad (likely one of Gurnow's sons, or even an outsider like Tom Brass) and offers to secretly support that ally in taking over Tharbad. Soon, gold from Mordor flows through the town, hiring mercenaries and greasing palms. Zoril herself intervenes to assassinate any troublesome holdouts, like Lady Stock or other loyalists. With the Crossings of Tharbad under surveillance, Zoril's next goal is to send spies north to the road to the Havens. (Leads to *The Kathuphazgân Moves Inland*.)

### 2970: BLOOD IN SWANFLEET

To secure Tharbad, the Black Númenóreans launch an assault on the folk of Swanfleet. The marshes are an effective barrier against most foes, but the Corsairs are used to fighting in the jungles and shifting shores of Harad, and are not dismayed.

### 2971: RITES IN THE BARROW-DOWNS

Bolstered by secrets found in Angmar, Usapthon travels to the ruins of Tyrn Gorthad to awaken the evil spirits that slumber there, and remind them of their ancient oaths to Sauron. More Barrow-wights awaken, and the east road becomes almost impassable as unwholesome fog creeps down from the hills. The Rangers fight to defend Bree-land and the other remnants of the kingdom from foes that would freeze their blood. (Leads to *The Fall of Lond Daer*.)

### 2972: THE FALL OF LOND DAER

The *Kathuphazgân* attacks Lond Daer, aided by spies and assassins in the city. The meagre defences of the little town are quickly overrun, and Queen Nimue's hall is set afire. The Queen's Men are mostly slain in the fray. Using her dark arts, Usapthon calls up the shade of the sea-serpent that once tormented the town, and sets it loose to guard the harbour. (Leads to *The Kathuphazgân Moves Inland*.)

Enslaved fisherfolk are forced to guide the mighty *Kathuphazgân* through the treacherous shoals of the harbour and up to the mouth of the Greyflood.

### 2973: THE KATHUPHAZGÂN MOVES INLAND

Over the course of several weeks, the warship travels up the Greyflood. Long ago, the river was made navigable by the efforts of the Men of Númenor, who straightened the river's course and laid paths along its banks, but time and water have destroyed most of these improvements. Therefore, the ship must be drawn up the river at great effort, using beasts of burden and brute force to wrestle it forward against the meandering river. By the time the weather turns, the *Kathuphazgân* is within a few days' walk of Tharbad, a wooden castle in the midst of Minhiriath, commanding the lowlands.

With their base of operations now hundreds of miles inland, much closer to their quarry, the Black Númenóreans begin to explore their new surroundings, especially upriver. (Leads to *Scouts in the Trollshaws*.)

### 2974: THIS IS NO PLACE OF HONOUR

Usapthon discovers the ghost pit in Tharbad (see page 11) and begins excavating it by night, seeking ancient relics from the War of Elves and Sauron. Her work releases evil vampire-spirits who fly out and clothe themselves in new flesh. Rumours spread that she has discovered a great hoard of treasure in the mud, a fortune equal to the golden bed of Smaug the Magnificent.

### 2974: SCOUTS IN THE TROLLSHAWS

From her new fortress in the heart of Minhiriath, Zoril dispatches scouts further north, following the course of the Hoarwell, in search of Rivendell. Other soldiers are sent to draw the Rangers and Elven sentinels away, by stirring up trouble in Bree-land or Angmar. The aim of this mission is to find the hidden valley — even Zoril, for all her brimming confidence, knows she cannot hope to destroy the home of Elrond Half-elven with the troops she has with her. No — she intends to return with a greater army at her back, but not yet.

### 2975: THE DISCOVERY OF RIVENDELL

A party of scouts from the *Kathuphazgân* crosses the ford, enters the hidden valley, and finds the House of Elrond. They flee, and Elrond commands the waters to rise. All but one of the scouts perishes in the flood, but the survivor is washed up on the riverbank a few miles away. Now, it's a race between Zoril and Elrond to find this last scout, to keep or reveal the secret location of the last refuge of the High Elves.

### 2975: HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

While Zoril's attention is distracted by events in the north, the thieves of Tharbad turn on their erstwhile allies, believing that Usapthon has stolen a great treasure from the ghost pit. There is bloodshed in the streets of Tharbad. Fate stands on a knife-edge — will this strife be the doom of Tharbad, or the *Kathuphazgân*, or both?



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# The White Hand of Saruman

*"The lore of the Elven-rings, great and small, is his province.*
*He has long studied it, seeking the lost secrets of their making…"*

At this point in history, the Wizard Saruman is still the head of the Istari, the leader of the White Council, and the chief foe of the Enemy. He has already begun to walk the ruinous path that will one day destroy him, but who can say when courage turns to folly, or prudent wisdom becomes callous intellect?

Once, all the Wizards were wanderers, travelling the length and breadth of Middle-earth to inspire heroes and prepare nations for the war to come against the Enemy. They first came to Middle-earth around the Year 1,000 of the Third Age, after the division of the North-kingdom into the three lands of Arthedain, Cardolan and Rhudaur, and Saruman was ever the counsellor and confessor to kings both north and south. Now, Saruman has taken the fortress of Isengard as his home, as he prepares for the final conflict with the Enemy.

Saruman is the master of three branches of lore. In diplomacy and rhetoric he has no equal, able to sway minds and build alliances. He has made a deep study of the ways and weapons of the Enemy, and has delved into dark sorcery and foul machinery — so that he might counter Sauron's arts. Third, he is a scholar of Ring-lore. The Wizards arrived in Middle-earth many thousands of years after the forging of the Rings of Power, after Sauron laid waste to Eregion and the Whispering Halls of Celebrimbor and the rings were scattered. Still, through painstaking study and experimentation, Saruman has learned much of these most precious jewels.

Now, as the Shadow lengthens, Saruman's mind turns ever to the question of the war, and how it might best be won. There is not strength enough in Elves or Men alone to defeat this Enemy. If their strengths could be unified, and guided by a wise hand, then there might be a chance. But how to exert such Will upon lesser minds? Only a Ring of Power could give such lordly powers of command. No one has dared make another Ring of Power since Sauron revealed his mastery of the Ruling Ring, for any other rings would likely fall under the dominion of the One — but Sauron lacks the One, so there is a chance. If Saruman can fill the gaps in his own Ring-lore and make his own Ring of Power, then — his powers magnified by the jewel — he might do what is necessary to complete the mission of the Istari. (*Or*, a voice in his mind whispers, *if you found the One Ring yourself…*)

## The Hunt for Ring-lore

So, in this time, Saruman is bent on searching for Ring-lore. He himself spent many long centuries scouring the ruins of Eregion, but chance can bring to light hitherto lost sources of lore. He suspects that some Ring-lore might be preserved in the Dwarven city of Khazad-dûm, for the Dwarves were great friends of the Hollin-elves. There might also be secrets in old strongholds of the Enemy, in Angmar or Dol Guldur, or brought over the sea from Númenor.

Saruman also suspects that some lore may have been hidden from him by rivals. He has come to mistrust Elrond, seeing him as weak and idle, unwilling to put forth the strength of his household — and just what is Gandalf hiding from him, in the obscure lands of the Shire? His jealousy of Gandalf has grown in recent years, especially after the Grey Pilgrim's twin victories in Erebor and Dol Guldur — and in the latter, it was Saruman whose magic drove the Enemy from his forest lair, but it is Gandalf who is acclaimed for discovering the true nature of the Necromancer.

Saruman employs a handful of spies and agents who report to him in Isengard; for perilous quests, he does as Wizards do — he finds a mismatched group of plucky underdog adventurers, and gives them a nudge in the right direction.

### SHADES OF WHITE AND GREY

Avoid making Saruman a premature villain. He is on the cusp of moral failure, but he hasn't fallen yet. In T.A. 2965, Saruman is still mostly on the side of good. Not wholly – he is quite willing, for example, to undermine Rohan in order to build up the strength of his Dunlending allies, and does not hesitate to treat 'lesser beings' as mere playing pieces, to be moved or sacrificed in the pursuit of advantage in the great game between the Wizards and Sauron.

The seeds have already been sown that will lead to his downfall – overconfidence in his own intellect, condescension towards lesser minds, the conviction that only he knows how to save the world, despair at the weakness of the Free Peoples, fear of Sauron, and most of all, the seductive mortal pragmatism of believing that compromise and mitigation are desirable outcomes in the war against evil.



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### SARUMAN AS A PATRON

| PATRON | FAVOURED CALLINGS | FELLOWSHIP POINTS | ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE | AGENDA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saruman | Scholar, Treasure Hunter | +0 | *The Voice of Wisdom.* You can spend Fellowship points to obtain a Magical Success on Awe, Persuade or Riddle rolls. Additionally, at the end of a Council you can spend a number of Fellowship points to add an equal number of successes to its outcome. | Study the arts of the Enemy, research Ring-lore. |

### SARUMAN AS A PATRON

A Company earning the patronage of the White Wizard gains a very powerful ally — Saruman is willing to generously support those who follow his 'counsel', especially if they don't ask too many questions…

The Wizard will contact the Player-heroes exclusively through intermediaries (see *Agents of Saruman*, below), only requesting a meeting in matters of extreme urgency or to relay secret news. When this happens, Saruman may counterfeit his appearance to travel incognito, for example assuming the likeness of one of his fellow Wizards, or he may disguise himself as a harmless wanderer. Saruman will generally choose Tharbad as a meeting place.

## AGENTS OF SARUMAN

Servants of Isengard might be encountered anywhere in Minhiriath. In addition to the personalities described below, the Loremaster can use the stats for Evil Men to create adversaries for the Player-heroes to fight (see *The One Ring*, page 146).

### *Arcinyas the Healer*

Old Arcinyas has been in the service of Saruman for a long time. He was a scholar and a master in the Houses of Healing once, but he barely remembers that life; Arcinyas has not looked upon the city of Gondor in many years, and cannot recall the precise colour of the sun on the snow atop Mount Mindolluin.

What he does know, these days, is the mind of Saruman. Few have served Isengard as long as he has, and none are privy to as many of Saruman's schemes and plans. Arcinyas has been the hand and eye of Isengard in Wilderland and Dale, the Vales of Anduin and Dorwinion.

For a time, he worked in the Gladden Fields for his master, studying herb-lore and gathering rare plants (and searching the muddy waters for the glint of a golden ring), but now Arcinyas is too old and blind for such work. Instead, Saruman has sent him north to be a healer once more. Saruman knows that one as skilled as Arcinyas is a rare and valuable thing; there are doors that a mighty siege engine could not break, but which open willingly to a healer. For now, all Arcinyas must do is make his services known to all the petty lords and folk of Minhiriath, so they will seek him out – and Arcinyas can report all he hears to Isengard.

In secret, though, Arcinyas has become bitter. He has grown old in the service of Saruman, and the White Wizard has not shared even a fraction of his lore with the scholar. Worse, while Saruman is unaging, Arcinyas is only mortal. His eyes grow dark, his hands tremble, and while his knowledge of herb-lore and healing is unmatched, he knows he cannot cure the death that waits for him.

He tells himself that only Saruman can do that, that only Saruman can make a Ring, like the Rings of old, that will stave off death and give Arcinyas time enough to learn all the secrets of the world. If Arcinyas ever lost faith in the White Wizard, then his betrayal would be deeply damaging to Saruman's plans.

**OCCUPATION:** Healer, Spy

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Frail

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## *Frecana, the Dunlending Princess*

Frecana is descended from Freca, a lord of Rohan who was quarrelled out by Helm Hammerhand, a king of Rohan who ruled in Edoras two hundred years ago. Helm slew Freca, and in revenge Freca's son Wulf allied with the Dunlendings and made war upon Rohan. At first, Wulf met with great success, for he drove Helm out of Edoras and claimed the crown for himself. But Helm endured, and stalked the land through a cruel winter, eating the flesh of men and growing strong with dark magic – or so they say in Dunland, where they still fear the ghost of Hammerhand. Now, Helm's sister-son Frealaf slew Wulf in turn and became king after Helm. Frealaf burned the castle of Freca, but he could not erase the deeds of Wulf from history – all of Dunland knew that one of their own had captured Edoras, and that the crown could be theirs again one day. Wulf was acclaimed a hero of the Hillfolk, and his name is still one of honour.

Freca's kin fled – and, secretly, Saruman gave them shelter in the vale of Nan Curunír. For two centuries, the Wizard has watched over the family, cultivating them. Some of them he has employed as agents and heroes, much as Gandalf does with certain Hobbit families. The 'Dunlending Princess', Frecana, is one such tool of the Wizard. She is a direct descendant of Freca, of the line of Wulf's sister-son, and so she reminds the Dunlendings of Wulf's brief but glorious reign. All her life, Saruman has prepared her for her destiny – she will be the one who unites the hill tribes under his guidance. He tutored her in Isengard, then sent her to walk among the Dunlendings and tell the tale of Wulf, the true king of Rohan, Wulf the Conqueror. He has trained her in the arts of diplomacy and rhetoric; whichever Dunlending chieftain captures the most territory will marry her, yoking this new Dunlending king to the house of Freca, and thence to Isengard.

For her part, Frecana is mostly willing to be a part of Saruman's schemes, for she trusts in the Wizard's wisdom. That said, she prays that the Dunlending warrior who wins her hand will be worthy of her; neither Ivoch the Boneless (page 45) nor scar-faced Tembur (page 46) are who she imagines ruling beside her. She learned treachery at Saruman's feet, too – if it comes to it, she will sabotage one Dunlending chieftain to ensure a more fitting match when the time comes for her to rule in Edoras.

**OCCUPATION:** Leader, Schemer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Cunning, Fair

## *Drustan the Mercenary*

Of Gondorian stock, Drustan has been one of Saruman's servants and messengers for several years. Drustan's a cynic, believing that the end of the world will come soon; all that remains is to eke out some little pleasure from these last days of the Sun before darkness swallows all Middle-earth forever. He's an accomplished traveller, tracker and swordsman, and is high in Saruman's counsels. His current task is to watch the Shire and the lands around it, seeking news of Gandalf; he's a regular at The Prancing Pony and the Bridge Inn at Tharbad.

**DRUSTAN THE MERCENARY**
Cunning, Hardened

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 24 | 2 | 6 | +2 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Long Sword 3 (5/18), Great Bow 3 (4/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Snake-Like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Resolve to make the attack roll ill-favoured.



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# Dark Designs of Isengard

### 2965: THE MESSENGER

Saruman dispatches a messenger to the hidden valley of Imladris. The messenger is ambushed by thieves south of Tharbad, and though she escapes, she is too badly wounded to continue her errand. On encountering the Player-heroes, she asks them to continue her errand and bring Saruman's letter to the House of Elrond. She warns them that thieves who ambushed her believe she's carrying treasure, and will not give up the hunt.

The letter describes a warrior in the service of King Thengel, a tall northern knight who calls himself Thorongil; Saruman asks if he is one of Elrond's household. If the heroes perform this mission, they win Saruman's favour. (Leads to *Summons to Isengard.*)

### 2966: SUMMONS TO ISENGARD

Saruman calls the Player-heroes to Isengard. He says that he fears that spies of the Enemy are abroad in Eriador, and that he is in need of stout and reliable agents of his own. The years are quickening now, the pieces moving across the great chess board of Middle-earth. He tells the heroes that he will ask them to be his hands and eyes, to do work in the shadows that the hearts of lesser heroes would quail at. Victory over the Enemy will be won only at a high price, and there can be no room for cowardice or hesitation. They must do as he commands without question, for subtle and strange are the ways of Wizards. If the heroes accept, Saruman becomes their patron. (Leads to *Spying on the Shire.*)

### 2967: AMBUSHING THE BLACK NÚMENÓREANS

Saruman's agents hunt and waylay some of the Black Númenórean spies from the ship *Kathuphazgân.* The captured spies are brought back to Isengard; the sorceress Usapthon vies with the Wizard to command the weather, and the return journey is beset by unnatural storms of astounding intensity and unpredictability. The Greyflood bursts its banks, and Tharbad is once again troubled by flooding. (Leads to *Mission to Angmar.*)

### 2968: SPYING ON THE SHIRE

Saruman previously dismissed Gandalf's liking for the Hobbits of the Shire as a mere indulgence on the part of the Grey Pilgrim, a sign of faltering will and failing courage, just as Radagast neglects his ordained purpose in favour of watching the woodland creatures of Mirkwood. Since the fall of Smaug, however, Saruman has come to wonder if there might not be something more to Gandalf's interest in the half-high.

The wedding of Drogo Baggins to Primula Brandybuck, a wedding bound to be of special magnificence involving two of the Shire's noteworthy families, is just the sort of Hobbit nonsense that might attract Gandalf — especially as Bilbo Baggins himself is bound to be there. Saruman dispatches spies to watch the Shire and the wedding in Buckland.

### 2968: THE LORE OF EREGION

The rainstorms of the previous year tore at the landscape, causing mudslides in places. Now, a baking hot summer dries out the ground, revealing traces of old structures hiding beneath the dry grass like fading ghosts. Between these two, it's possible that hitherto unexplored ruins of old Eregion might become accessible. Saruman sends his agents in search of Ring-lore.

The quest leads them into the marshes of Swanfleet. (Leads to *Into Moria.*)

### 2969: MISSION TO ANGMAR

Saruman's unseen conflict with the agents of the Enemy continues, as he works to undermine Usapthon's plans to reach the distant realm of Angmar. He was able to read much of the younger woman's thoughts when they clashed two years ago, and knows that she seeks power amid the ruins of the Witch-king's realm. Saruman sends messengers and hunters north along the road, to intercept Usapthon's expedition before it can reach its destination.

### 2972: INTO MORIA

The Dwarves of Moria were close allies of the Elves of Eregion — the makers of the Rings of Power. If the lore of ring-making was preserved anywhere after the destruction of Eregion, then it might be within the halls of Khazad-dûm. Rumour reaches Isengard that a few foolhardy treasure hunters have dared to pass the West-gate and explore the fabled Black Pit.

There has been no sign of the lost Ruling Ring in nearly three thousand years — no doubt it has rolled down the Anduin to the sea, and there let it lie until the End. But there can be a new beginning, a new forging of Rings. The intent of Sauron may have been evil, but the design was sound. Let the Free Peoples be guided by a wise and cunning mind… and the lore needed to bring about that work may be found in Moria.



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# Raiders from Dunland

*"Not in half a thousand years have they forgotten their grievance that the lords of Gondor gave the Mark to Eorl the Young and made alliance with him."*

From their hill forts and dark ravines come the Hillfolk of Dunland, raiding and conquering. The Dunlendings are nomads, much akin to the Fisher-folk of the shore of Eriador, but better armed and more warlike. They may not take the land of the few folk who yet dwell in Minhiriath, but they intend to carry plunder and slaves back to the southlands.

To the south of their land, King Thengel sits on his throne in Edoras, and Rohan's strength is growing once more. Thengel's sire Fengel was not a good king, and in his reign the tribes of Dunland were able to take territory from the Horse-lords. Now, they have been pushed back across the Isen once more, and some Dunlending tribes now look for easier pickings in the north. Minhiriath is mostly empty — there's land for the taking, and no sharp-speared horsemen to trouble them.

## The Years of the Raids

In these years, the tribes of Dunland become more aggressive. Outlaws and brigands cluster along the North–South road and travel down the River Isen to the Sea. Tharbad — long the target of Dunlending aggression — is once more attacked, but most of the fighting is in the wilds of Enedwaith and Minhiriath, as the raiders cross the Greyflood and attack the farmsteads.



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## The Chieftains of Dunland

The Dunlendings serve no king, but follow strong and ruthless leaders who in other realms would sit on a throne. If the Loremaster needs adversaries for the Player-heroes to face, refer to the stats for *Southerner Raider* and *Southerner Champion* presented on page 146 of *The One Ring*.

### *Ivoch the Boneless*

Now Ivoch was the son of a mighty chieftain named Imlar, but when Ivoch was seven years old, he fell ill with a fever that wracked his body with terrible pains. Imlar brought the boy to Isengard, and there his life was saved — but he was not made whole, for the boy's legs were left numb and unmoving as stone. Never would Ivoch ride a stolen horse, or walk the stony hills. Furious, Imlar ordered that the boy be abandoned in the wilds to die, as is the custom of the hillfolk.

Ivoch begged his father to spare him, and the boy's mother beseeched him too, but Imlar was unmoved. He struck the mother, saying "you have given me only one child, and this one is sick and broken; to the Sea with both of you!" And then he threw the boy's mother from a cliff, and had his men carry Ivoch out into the hills to perish in the barren places where only ghosts dwell.

But Ivoch did not die. He crawled for days, dragging himself forward by the strength of his arms alone. Like a shadow, he crept back into the hill-fort of his father, a dagger clenched in his teeth. He slew his treacherous father, and claimed the chieftain's seat. The men of the tribe were much impressed by the boy's courage and cunning, and acclaimed him their leader.

Ivoch has grown into a great warrior and tactician. He cannot walk, but his warriors fight for the honour of bearing his litter. In battle, he rides a chariot, binding himself to a stout pole to keep himself upright, and wielding a long-hafted axe in his mighty hand, but his talent lies in strategy; he knows that battles are often won or lost long before the first blow is struck, and knows how to use hunger and terror to his advantage in war.

He is close to Saruman, and listens closely when the Wizard speaks of bringing order and strength to the lands west of the Gap of Rohan. The White Wizard's words paint a vision of a new division of the world, when the bloodless, fragile kingdom of Gondor and their Rohirrim lapdogs will be swept away and a new age of Men will begin, Men not beholden to the distant past.

He may be fatherless and boneless, but Ivoch is determined that he will not die crownless...

**IVOCH THE BONELESS**
Disabled, Lordly

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 5

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 2 | 5 | — | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Long-hafted Axe 3 (6/18, Break Shield)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fierce.* Spend 1 Resolve point to *gain (1d)* on an attack and to make the roll *Favoured.*

*Horrible Strength.* If Ivoch scores a Piercing Blow with a close combat attack, spend 1 Resolve to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured.*

*Yell of Triumph.* Spend 1 Resolve to restore 1 Resolve to all allies in the fight.



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## Tembur

A full accounting of the many injuries and insults inflicted on Tembur by the men of Rohan is too long to list here; it begins in the time of his great-great-grandfather, who was put to death by the Strawheads. Thus began a long and bloody feud, as the carven stones in Tembur's fort tell; death upon death, echoing down through many generations. Tembur was born into this feud, raised upon hatred like mother's milk. All his life, he knew his destiny – to be the Forgoil-bane, the ruin of Rohan.

Long he quested, in abandoned Dwarf-holds and mountain tombs. In armour of steel he arrayed himself, and in his hand a spear forged by ancient smiths, wound round with runes of power. Long he prepared, gathering to himself a warband of bitter, cruel men, each one singularly talented in some method of killing or another. Tembur's intent was to bring destruction to the lands of Rohan. When he dreams, he dreams of Edoras aflame, the golden hall turning red with fire. He planned to sneak into the Westfold and sow chaos beyond the River Isen.

Tembur's first assault on Rohan, however, was defeated. A band of horsemen, an *éored* guided by the tracker Thorongil of the North, discovered Tembur's company and attacked them. Tembur's warriors scattered in fear, each man trying to save only himself, abandoning the shield wall that might otherwise have bristled with spears and held against the cavalry charge. Tembur himself was trampled, and his body still bears the marks of horseshoes as scars that will never heal.

He has added this insult to the long list.

The defeat taught Tembur patience. He must grow stronger before he attacks Rohan again. This time, he will train his warriors to fight as one; he will find more magic; he will sharpen his spear-head on the skulls of many enemies. He is Forgoil-bane, horse-hater, ruiner of Rohan, and his destiny will not be denied.

Tembur makes a point of mutilating any horses he encounters, laming them so they cannot be ridden.

**TEMBUR, THE FORGOIL-BANE**
Cruel, Fierce

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 5

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 2 | 5 | +2 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Rune-scored Spear 3 (5/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fierce.* Spend 1 Resolve point to *gain (1d)* on an attack and to make the roll *Favoured.*

*Hatred (Rohirrim).* When targeting Rohirrim, all attacks are *Favoured.*

*Hideous Toughness.* When an attack inflicts damage to Tembur that would cause him to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if Tembur is still alive, he returns to full Endurance.

## Eater of Ghosts

Eater of Ghosts comes from the dark places under the hills. She paints her face skull-white, for she walks in the otherworld, the land of the dead. Even though she is young, she speaks with the voices of many old men, and knows things no young woman should know. It is said of Eater of Ghosts that she consumes the dead, and makes them part of her.

Eater of Ghosts has no love for the wizard Saruman; she says that she mistrusts the master of Isengard because she remembers the Men who built the fortress, long long ago, and knows they are no friends of the Hillfolk. Still, when the White Hand points north, Eater of Ghosts goes – not because she loves or obeys the Wizard, but because her belly is empty and the barrows of Tyrn Gorthad are full and ripe for plundering.



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The followers of Eater of Ghosts are fearless, for they know if they perish, she will eat their ghosts and they will become part of their ghostly queen. Most of her warband comes from Dunland, but as the Shadow in the east grows, more madmen and prophets of doom are drawn to her.

**THE EATER OF GHOSTS**
Fey, Wicked

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 5

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 2 | 5 | +3 | 2 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Spear 3 (3/14, Pierce), Long-hafted Axe 3 (6/18, Break Shield)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fierce.* Spend 1 Resolve point to *gain (1d)* on an attack and to make the roll *Favoured.*

*Heartless.* The Eater of Ghosts is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Strike Fear.* Spend 1 Resolve to make all Player-heroes in sight gain 1 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

## Dark Designs of the Dunlendings

The expansion of the Dunlendings is fostered and supported by Isengard — Saruman's designs require a ready supply of strong backs and deft hands, so he intends to make most of Dunland into his personal fiefdom. (Were the Istari not sent to bring guidance to the Free Peoples? Is it not better that the strength and bloodlust of the hill tribes is put to productive use?) He has directed the Dunlendings away from Rohan — part of the bargain that gave Saruman control of Isengard was that he would deter Dunlending raids on Gondor's ally, and send them north and west instead.

### 2965: SMOKE RISES OVER ISENGARD

In Isengard, black smoke belches out of secret forges, as Saruman begins to prepare his industrial works. His smiths make weapons and armour in great numbers according to his clever designs; these trappings of war are given to the Dunlendings in exchange for an oath to the White Hand of Saruman. The raids on Rohan stop — for now. (Leads to *Outlaws on the Road.*)

### 2966: OUTLAWS ON THE ROAD

Dunlending bands camp along the North–South road, watching for travellers. They track the Dwarven caravans and wandering smiths that travel through this region, monitoring their progress to find the scattered small farmsteads in Enedwaith. Some creep as far north as the edges of Tharbad, and skirmish with soldiers from that town. (Leads to *The Burning of Minhiriath.*)

### 2968: THE BURNING OF MINHIRIATH

All through this terrible year, Dunlending raiders sweep through Minhiriath as far north as the banks of the Brandywine. Rangers and other stout warriors keep the raiding parties away from Bree-land, but other parts of Eriador feel the bite of steel from Isengard in this dread year. Some farmlands are deserted, with people fleeing north to Bree or west to Lond Daer in the hope of finding safety behind strong walls.

Of the three Dunlending warbands described above, the forces of Eater of Ghosts strike towards the Barrow-downs, while the warriors of the Boneless attempt to cross the Swanfleet to come at Tharbad from the north-east.

All this has the useful effect of drawing unwanted eyes away from Saruman's activities in Eregion.



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### 2970: THE IRON BARGAIN

A band of Dunlending raiders encounters a band of Fisher-folk of the coast while travelling along the river Isen. These two tribes are distant relatives, and meet peacefully. The Fisher-folk tell of a new town, built on the ruins of an older one, at the mouth of the Greyflood — a town rich and prosperous, ripe for the taking. Why, the Fisher-folk can show the well-armed men of Dunland the secret paths through the dunes to take the knights of Lond Daer by surprise… (Leads to *Raid on Lond Daer.*)

### 2972: RAID ON LOND DAER

In this year, unless the Player-heroes prevent it, Lond Daer is attacked and despoiled by raiders from Dunland. The town is laid waste, and prisoners are taken back as slaves by sea to the mouth of the Isen, then marched upriver into Dunland. Queen Nimue is burnt alive in her hall. (Leads to *Across the Brandywine.*)

### 2974: ACROSS THE BRANDYWINE

Bolstered by their success in Lond Daer, the Dunlendings turn their eyes to an even richer prize — the Dwarven fortress at Harmelt (see page 24). The mountain of the Dwarves is well fortified and guarded by many axe-wielding warriors — but thanks to the Wizard, the Dunlendings have weapons to match, and their alliance with the cruel Fisher-folk means they can sail up the coast to land on Harlindon and then march inland.

Dunlending scouts creep through the woods of the southern Blue Mountains, and dream of Dwarven gold. Harmelt is not Moria; this is not some haunted tomb where no man dares go. No, Harmelt is inhabited by the living, and the living can be killed… (Leads to *The Assault on the Dwarf-hold.*)

### 2975: THE ASSAULT ON THE DWARF-HOLD

The Dunlendings attack Harmelt, swarming up the hillside and looting the golden halls within. Some Dwarves escape, and call for aid from neighbouring Dwarf-holds in the Blue Mountains. Cut off from their boats, the Dunlendings must face the long march south across the Lone-lands, laden down with their stolen gold. They have a king's ransom in treasure, but there are vengeful Dwarves behind and many hundreds of leagues ahead…

# Other Shadows

*"...doom and great deeds are indeed at hand."*

These dangers either slumber until awoken, or are not tied to the passing years.

## The Beast of the Greyflood

A water-serpent dwells in the lower reaches of the Greyflood. The beast is akin to the one that threatened Lond Daer — perhaps its mate, or child. If it's a child, though, then the monsters grow quickly indeed, for the Beast of the Greyflood is even larger than the Serpent of Lond Daer. It slumbers in the muddy waters of the lower river, and makes its lair in some watery cave or ruin. It hunts mainly by lying in wait for creatures who come down to the riverbanks to drink; the Beast then grabs them in its massive jaws and hauls them into the river to drown before devouring the remains. It is large enough to snatch a full-grown wild ox with ease. Staying away from the water is not enough to avoid the Beast, however — the monster is amphibious, able to wriggle its bulk out of the river and slither across the land like a giant snake. It has been known to slaughter a whole herd of cattle in a single night, draining the animals of their blood like a vampire instead of eating them whole (and some tales claim that the animals do not flee the Beast, but stand there as if frozen, unable to move a muscle, while the serpent feasts).

The Knights of Lond Daer (see page 83) compete among themselves to be the first to slay the Beast; so far, the bloodless corpses of a half-dozen knights lie rotting in the mire, and the Beast is yet unharmed.

## The Walker in the Darkness

It is said that an unwise lord in the north of Minhiriath wished to sow wheat in a particular field, and so ordered his followers to clear and level the land. Now, a barrow-grave of ancient kings stood in the field, lost beneath the grass and wild-flowers, and the workers did not know what they had done until they broke through into the burial chamber. The lord ignored their warnings that breaking a barrow brings bad luck, and held instead that this was a



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great stroke of fortune — and indeed, he took from the barrow many precious things, swords wound around with gold wire, and goblets of silver, and jewelled rings, and he distributed them among his warriors and followers as gifts. Having emptied the barrow, he had his followers cast down the burial slab and the bones that lay on it, and level the earth-mound. The field was sown, and in time it brought forth a bountiful crop.

At harvest-time, the lord invited all his workers to a feast, and they ate and drank their fill. But as night fell, a stranger arrived. He was clad all in white, and though his face was not hidden, no one could look upon it without quailing in terror. "Where is my house?" demanded the stranger, and when none could answer him, he strangled the lord with his pale hands.

The Walker still roams the land, searching for his lost barrow. Anyone who stole from him — anyone who even ate the bread made from the wheat that grew on his land — has forfeited their lives, and the curse extends even to their descendants. The Walker will sleep only when all those who offended him are dead.

## The Dream of Moria

Khazad-dûm, the oldest of cities, the legendary fortress of Durin, fell a thousand years ago when Durin's Bane awoke. The Dwarves have long dreamed of reclaiming that fabled place. In years past, burglars and Dwarven pilgrims alike sometimes dared enter the upper levels of the ruin, seeking treasures and relics left by Durin's Folk. Many of these trespassers fell victim to the Orcs that ruled Moria's halls, and as the Orcs grew more and more numerous, fewer dared brave the long dark of the pit.

About two hundred years ago, there was a war between Orcs and Dwarves over the matter of the murder of King Thrór. The Dwarves won the Battle of Dimrill Dale, but did not enter Moria, and young Dáin Ironfoot — now King Under the Mountain — famously said that the world must change before Durin's Folk walk again in Moria, and forbade his followers from returning there.

Now, after the Battle of Five Armies broke the power of the Orcs, many in Eriador look again to the treasures of Moria. Just because Durin's folk are not trying to return to Khazad-dûm, that doesn't mean that another line of the Dwarves cannot reign there…

## The Long Defeat

The last threat facing this land is not one that can be defeated by force of arms, nor is it a new danger. Minhiriath has long been in decline; it is a land of ruins and ghosts, empty and silent save for the keening of the wind and the song of birds. There are fewer and fewer people living here. The Elves are going west, the Dwarves hide in their mountains, and the Men diminish and have not the strength or learning of the days of old. This is a dying land.

The Player-heroes cannot reverse this decay. They can slow it, perhaps, by aiding little guttering sparks of light like Lond Daer, but they cannot remake that which is broken. The decline of Minhiriath should progress over the course of a long campaign; every year should reveal some aspect of the land fading. Homes are abandoned and fall into ruin; allies perish or lose hope; melancholy emptiness or savage brutality rule in the lands of long-dead kings.

This is a dying land, and it will only be renewed when the King returns.

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The twelve landmarks contained in this chapter are described using the structure presented in the Appendix of *The One Ring* (see page 221). As discussed there, the chosen format allows the Loremaster to use each landmark as an open-ended, self-contained scenario, free of a strict, predetermined plot, articulated in orderly scenes. The Player-heroes learn of the existence of a landmark during the game, for example by choosing the Gathering Rumours Fellowship Phase Undertaking (see *The One Ring*, page 121).

The text of each landmark assumes that the Loremaster will adjudicate all actions taken by the Company using the core rules for *The One Ring*. This means that the rules for Journeys, Combat or Councils are not repeated, nor are those concerning Actions, Skill Endeavours, Risk Levels or Sources of Injury — whenever the text of a landmark describes a challenge or an obstacle to the Company, the Loremaster should adjudicate the circumstances based on the appropriate game rules.

# The Old Dwarf-mines

*"…let him not vow to walk in the dark, who has not seen the nightfall."*

### RUMOUR

*"There's an old Dwarf-mine in the Blue Mountains — and aye, there are lots of Dwarf-mines in those parts, all the old hills round there are riddled with 'em, like a wormy apple. The point is, this mine's special. A king of olden times once hid there, with all his jewels and treasures. Now, this king was pursued by a fearsome beast out of Angmar, and it's said that the only way he could slay it was by putting his biggest jewel down its throat to choke it. But the rest of the treasure's still there for the taking — if you can find it."*

### OLD LORE

*"Arvedui was the last king of Arthedain. In his day, the armies of the Witch-king of Angmar destroyed Fornost Erain, and Arvedui and his followers were forced to flee. They took with them such treasures as they could carry on horseback, for they were sorely pursued by their foes. They took refuge in an abandoned Dwarf-mine called Scowle Hill, and there they hid until hunger drove them forth. It is said that to lighten his load, King Arvedui left certain lesser treasures behind in the mines, intending to return for them one day. But Arvedui perished, and the treasures of Scowle Hill have never been found."*

## Background

Scowle Hill lies near the northern edge of the Blue Mountains. It is a cold land, choked by sudden and cruel snowstorms in winter. No folk have dwelt here in a great many years. Elves came this way once, so long ago that even they barely remember the tale, but the hills and stones still echo with the sound of their proud trumpets, and those who slumber here may dream of better days. The Snowmen of Forochel, across the bay, come here to their summer camps on the shore to hunt and gather berries, but their homes and their hearts lie in the ice.

In the First Age, the Dwarves came here to dig iron and coal, which are found in abundance beneath Scowle Hill. These mines were abandoned when the nearby Dwarven cities were destroyed in the cataclysm that ended that Age and changed all the lands. The abandoned mines lay silent for many centuries, a haunt of ghosts and terrors, until King Arvedui came here to hide.

Arvedui was the last king of Arthedain. His capital at Fornost Erain had fallen to the forces of the Witch-king, and now those foes were close by. Arvedui was accompanied by a handful of his most loyal knights, and they carried with them



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some of the treasures of the kingdom. Two such treasures in particular gave Arvedui hope, for he yet possessed two of the fabled Seeing Stones — the palantíri of Annúminas and Amon Sûl. The master-stone of Amon Sûl was valuable in particular, for it could reach its counterpart in Gondor and call for aid. Messengers had already been dispatched by land and sea, but Arvedui well knew the vigilance of the Witch-king, and he could not be sure that word had reached the south. However, while the palantír of Annúminas was small enough for a strong man to hold in one hand, the other stone was much larger and heavier, and could only be carried in a cart or travois.

Unable to bring the stone much further across the rough terrain in the gathering snow, Arvedui and his followers took refuge in the mines of Scowle Hill. Here, they thought, they could hide from the Witch-king's soldiers until they could find aid. The Dwarf-mines under the hill were a labyrinth, with many winding passageways and sudden dead ends. The warriors of Arthedain made camp under the hill, and at first it seemed their fortune had changed — they found fresh water, hunted wild deer for meat, and their scouts reported no sign of pursuit. Arvedui hoped that his kingdom might be restored with the aid of Gondor.

Then came the Beast.

Where it was whelped, none can say. Maybe the Witch-king conjured it with foul sorcery in Angmar, or maybe it was older still, spawned in an earlier age in the pits of Thangorodrim. Maybe it was some primordial horror caught and employed by Angmar. It was of bear-shape, yet greater, blind and misshapen, hunting by smell. It tracked the company of Arvedui across the wilds of Eriador, and followed them into the mines. One by one, the Beast slew Arvedui's champions; no blade could harm it, nor hero slay it.

At great cost, the warriors managed to block a passageway, keeping the Beast from reaching them, but the way to the eastern mine entrance was now inaccessible, and they were cut off from any source of food. In time, hunger drove the king to leave the mines and try his fortune on the icy shore. He took with him only the most precious treasures, leaving the rest hidden. Other tales tell of the fate of Arvedui and the palantíri, and that sorry fate is not recounted here.

The Beast still slumbers in the depths of the mine — and lost treasures of Arnor wait there too.

## LOCATIONS

A Company travelling north along the eastern foothills of the Ered Luin must go beyond the course of the Little Lune to find the entrance to the Old Dwarf-mines. The woods in this distant and little-travelled land are sparse, made mostly of scraggly pine and holly. There is some good hunting here for those willing to track the herds of deer as they migrate, chasing the sun. The Snowmen of the north hunt in these lands, sometimes, and come here to gather herbs and mushrooms that do not grow in their frozen lands.

Eventually, the trace of a half-buried Dwarven road appears, snaking its way west towards a narrow valley, opening where a river once cut the rock of the mountains over the course of a thousand years. There the Scowle Gate lies, among the shadows of the sheltered dale.

### JOURNEY EVENTS

The Company may obtain information about the precise location of the mines in several ways. Here are two examples.

**STEALING FROM THIEVES:** The Player-heroes capture a brigand named Ned-in-the-Hedge as they travel north along the Ered Luin — and this brigand wields a fine sword of ancient make. When questioned, the brigand says that he found the sword in a cave in the far north — an old mine, he thinks. The cave floor was strewn with bones, and stank of some bear or other beast, so he fled with his prize before the monster returned — but he thinks there may have been other treasures in the cave. Why, in exchange for his freedom, Ned will lead the company north to that cave, so they can find their own ancient swords...

**RUMOUR OF THE BEAST:** Though it spends most of its time asleep, occasionally hunger awakens the Beast of Angmar (see page 56), and finding no prey in the vicinity of Scowle Hill, it prowls south, troubling the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains before returning to the mines. The Player-heroes may encounter one or more Dwarves bent on tracking the Beast to its lair and slaying it; this is an opportunity for the Company to gain more information, or help dealing with the creature.

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### 1. SCOWLE GATE

The Dwarven miners once dwelt in a small Dwarf-hall in this valley, but that place is long since despoiled and destroyed. The main entrance to the mine collapsed long ago, blocking access to the underground complex, but the line of a path they built can still be discerned, skirting the sides of the valley, and leading to one of the side entrances, gaping like the maw of some tremendous beast.

The opening leads to the Southern Mines.

### 2. THE SOUTHERN MINES

This portion of the mines is a labyrinth. Unlike the fabled Mines of Moria, which were expanded into a grand city with wide boulevards and vaulted halls, these mines were purely functional. There are no halls here, no magnificent underground chambers — just endless narrow tunnels worming into the hillside. They are Dwarf-height, too, so a tall man must stoop to pass this way.

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**EXPLORING THE SOUTHERN MINES:** The mines are ancient — the shifting of the earth has caused some passages to collapse, and others have flooded:

> All Player-heroes exploring the maze are required to make an EXPLORE or RIDDLE roll at Hazardous Risk level (a Failure with Woe may cause damage — see the rules on page 134 of *The One Ring* — but may also mean that the failing Player-hero has been captured by the Beast…).

After each successful roll, the Player-heroes reach either The Ancient Grave, The Lair of the Beast, or The Narrow Path, based on the general direction they declared to explore (or, the Loremaster may select one at random).

### 3. THE ANCIENT GRAVE

This grave is a humble cairn of stones, piled over a body that has long since gone to dust. Interred here was the first of Arvedui's warriors to fall in battle with the Beast. Another dozen knights fell to the Beast's claws, but there was no time to dig graves for them; as the Beast gained a taste for manflesh, its attacks became relentless.

The fallen knight's name was writ hastily in runes that are still legible — "HERE LIES MALANTETH, GUARD OF THE KING, SLAIN BY THE BEAST OF ANGMAR". The cairn has not been disturbed since it was built. If opened, her sword lies within, unrusted and still sharp thanks to the magic of its forging. A hero who takes the sword must swear to slay the Beast, or the sword becomes cursed.

#### MALANTETH'S SWORD

The sword was forged in Annúminas by master-smiths, and is an excellent blade. It is a Superior Fell, Superior Grievous, Keen sword and wound around with spells that make it a Bane to Orcs and Evil Men. However, if the wielder of the sword does not swear to slay the Beast of Angmar, then the sword becomes cursed with the Curse of Weakening, increasing the Bearer's HEART TN by 2 while the Beast yet lives.



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### 4. THE LAIR OF THE BEAST

The still-living Beast of Angmar makes its lair on the lower levels of the southern mine, close to a semi-flooded cave network that leads to the surface. It sleeps on a nest of bones — mostly deer and bear, but also a few unlucky Snowmen. There is a little treasure here, if you can stand the rank stink of the Beast.

The Beast is ancient and slow now. If it captures one of the Player-heroes or another victim, it drags them back here to its lair to slowly devour them, lapping up their hot blood.

## *The Beast, Terror of Angmar*

The Beast resembles a great, blind, misshapen grey bear, with an eerily human-like face and hands; it hunts by smell, so its snuffling may warn Player-heroes of its approach.

**BEAST OF ANGMAR**
Cunning, Hungry

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 9

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 70 | 2 | 6(9) | – | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Bite 2 (3) (6/14, Pierce), Claws 2 (3) (6/14, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Unnatural Hunger.* When first encountered, the Beast is sluggish and slow. If the Beast eats a victim, it returns to full Endurance and Hate, heals any Wound it has and becomes faster and stronger, using the higher Hate, Bite and Claw scores in brackets and gaining the Fell Ability *Fierce*.

*Fierce.* Spend 1 Hate to *gain (1d)* and make the attack roll *Favoured*.

*Horrible Strength*. If the creature scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

*Hideous Toughness*. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Strike Fear*. Spend 1 Hate to make all Player-heroes in sight gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

*Thick Hide*. Spend 1 Hate point to gain (2d) on a Protection roll.

Once the victim perishes from blood loss, the Beast eats the remains — but there's a small chance that a captured victim could be rescued from the Beast's lair in time to save their life. Once the Beast eats enough, it recovers its strength and becomes much more active and dangerous, mangling and swiftly gobbling enemies, leaving no opportunity for rescue. This period of fearsome vigour lasts for a few seasons before it falls back into slumber.

### 5. THE NARROW PATH

There is only one extant tunnel that connects the northern and southern portion of the mines. Here is where the knights of Arthedain tried and failed to hold the Beast; their bones are dust, but the marks of the Beast's claws can still be seen, deeply graven into the rock.

### 6. THE NORTHERN MINES

The northern portion of the mines is much like the south: a warren of passageways. There are more dead ends here, more unfinished tunnels, and a greater risk of cave-ins.

Exploring the northern mines also requires each Player-hero to make an **EXPLORE** or **RIDDLE** roll at Hazardous Risk level. Successful rolls lead to The Last Hall, The Treasure Trove, The Well, or The North Door.

### 7. THE LAST HALL

The last hall is like a subterranean mirage, as unexpected as an oasis in the desert. The rough, narrow tunnels of the mines suddenly give way to a large hall of stone, its roof supported by ornate pillars, with smaller chambers off to the sides for sleeping-quarters and stores. The Dwarves built this hall after they chased the coal-veins far from their houses near the Scowle Gate. Carvings made by idle miners depict all manner of scenes, from heroic images of Durin and the other fathers of the Dwarves to fanciful forests and distant mountains. A huge iron candelabra — now more rust than metal — hangs from the ceiling.

In later years, King Arvedui took shelter here. The only signs of his time are some messages scratched into one wall, discoverable by anyone inspecting the surface with attention.

- There's a line of numbers — likely dates, as the warriors trapped in the darkness tried to keep track of the passage of time on the surface.
- Then: "WE CANNOT GO BACK. WE MUST BRAVE THE ICE. HIS HAND IS AT OUR THROAT."
- Nearby, there's another message, in a different hand: "A CURSE ON ANYONE WHO TAKES THAT WHICH DOES NOT BELONG TO THEM. MAY THEIR NAMES BE COUNTED WITH AR-PHARAZÔN."



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### 8. THE TREASURE TROVE

This chamber is located in the vicinity of the Last Hall. It once contained the treasures of Fornost Erain that could not be carried by the king's entourage when they fled — books of ancient lore, paintings and tapestries, relics of lost Númenor. The passing years have destroyed them all, leaving nothing but leathery fragments and dust.

Sifting through the debris, the adventurers can recover a Lesser Hoard of treasure in the form of gold or jewelled clasps and other metallic remnants. However, there's no sign of any coins, gemstones or other jewels.

### 9. THE WELL

The well opens in a domed chamber, lit by a single shaft of light from above during the day. The Dwarves dug this well to provide fresh water to the Last Hall. The well is dark and deep, the water cold enough to freeze the soul.

Player-heroes looking about the well, maybe with the help of a lantern or torch, spot a glint of gold near this well — there's a single coin on the floor, wedged in a crack in the rock. The departing men of Arthedain threw their gold and other treasures into the well to hide them. Recovering the treasure will be a challenge — a cunning Dwarf could doubtless drain the well with months of labour, or the adventurers could dive for it, a few handfuls at a time.

Swimming down to the bottom of the well requires an ATHLETICS test and causes a severe Endurance loss upon a failure. Success garners Treasure points equal to the roll of a Feat die, with an eye counting as 0 and a ᚠ indicating some notable item like a jewelled necklace. The well contains a Greater Hoard of treasure, should the characters manage to fish it all out.

### 10. THE NORTH DOOR

This exit from the mines leads out among the last peaks of the northern Ered Luin, towards the frozen wastes of the Ice-bay of Forochel. It lies wide open, its stone door glued against the mountainside by a thick layer of ancient ice.

The Lossoth camp among the foothills here sometimes, as they have done for countless generations, but they consider the place to be haunted, and stay away from it. Not even the eldest and wisest among them recall anything of the king who once took refuge among them, or the tale of the Ring of Barahir — those events took place more than a thousand years ago, and the Lossoth do not share the Dúnedain's obsession with the deeds and treasures of a vanished past. You cannot eat stones in the winter, the Lossoth say.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### *Snow-wights*

The tales of the Lossoth speak of evil spirits sent by the Witch-king to torment his foes: Wights who in other lands inhabited corpses in barrows. Here, though, they found no bodies to steal, and so must clothe themselves in shapes of snow.

There is truth in these tales — the Witch-king did indeed dispatch his minions to the north to pursue his foes, and those spirits still haunt the hills around the mine. When the snow falls, the Snow-wights form, building temporary physical forms for themselves from the snow and ice. When visible, they resemble travellers who have wandered far in inclement weather, a thick rime of ice on their cloak, but there is nothing but icy air and hate beneath the shell of snow. They wield blades of ice that they form out of the frigid air.

Snow-wights can be found outside or inside the Old Dwarf-mines, as they can enter the underground complex from the North Door.

**SNOW-WIGHT**
Cruel, Stealthy

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 4

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | 1 | 4 | – | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Icy Blade 3 (4/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Deathless*. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, spend 1 Hate to bring the creature back to full Endurance instead. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a magical weapon enchanted with spells for the Bane of the Undead.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Freeze the Blood.* At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more Snow-wights gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are dismayed and all their rolls are *Ill-favoured* for the rest of the fight.



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# The White Towers

*Three Elf-towers of immemorial age were still to be seen on the Tower Hills beyond the western marches. They shone far off in the moonlight. The tallest was furthest away, standing alone upon a green mound.*

### RUMOUR

*"Three ancient Elf-towers rise from the hills beyond the Shire's western marches, their luminous construction radiating moonlight, visible from distant leagues. The westernmost tower is the tallest still, and it is said one can see the Sea from its top. No Hobbit has been known to climb the tower, but Elves sometimes visit, disappearing through the White Towers' doors."*

### OLD LORE

*"The White Towers are thousands of years old, built by the Elven High King Gil-galad as a gift for Elendil, the first King of Arnor. Elendil chose the westernmost tower, Elostirion, to house one of the legendary seeing stones he rescued from the Fall of Númenor. The palantír still resides in the tower, one of the few not lost to the passing of ages, though its visions always track westwards. Elves of Lindon visit the White Towers to glimpse the paradise awaiting them in the Undying Lands."*

## Background

The White Towers are treasured holdings of the Elves of Lindon. The palantír housed within Elostirion is a relic of a bygone age, unique even amongst the remaining palantíri for its clear visions of the Undying Lands. The Elves use it to look along the Straight Road leading to the shores of the Blessed Realm, and to prepare their spirits to journey into the west.

Yet there are others who seek to break the westward-gaze of the Elendil stone, and use its power to spy upon Middle-earth instead, as it seems that the palantír of Elostirion has occasionally granted visions of imminent threats, warning the Elves of approaching danger.

These rare instances granted some lore-masters hope that the palantír can be mastered to grant them foresight over Eriador and beyond, perhaps even reconnecting the stone with others in Middle-earth. Círdan the Shipwright, keeper of the stone of Elostirion, is wary of such ambitions, no matter how pure-hearted their intent — if the Elendil stone permanently lost its ability to perceive the Undying Lands, it would be a heavy blow to the spirits of the remaining Elves of Eriador.

## Locations

The White Towers are most easily reached by the East–West Road, almost as far west as the Grey Havens themselves, beyond the borders of the Shire. A Company will be able to see the three pillars from a great distance, as they rise high above the Tower Hills, and their radiant construction reflects the light of sun and moon. This is a pleasant country, with gently sloping green mounds, and a cooling breeze from the west. When the Company is close enough, they may hear the voice of an Elf maiden singing from the windows of the southernmost tower, Astirion.

### REASONS TO VISIT ELOSTIRION

Simply hearing rumours about the White Towers might not be enough to motivate a Company to visit. Here follow some possible 'hooks' that the Loremaster may use, based on the current circumstances of the Player-heroes and their aims.

- The Elves believe in secrecy, and in any case they don't possess the strength to maintain a garrison to protect the towers besides a single custodian, so a Company may be asked to protect the White Towers if they are believed to be endangered.
- A Patron may instruct the Player-heroes to consult the palantír, or to peruse the extensive library of Elostirion for forgotten lore.
- In these dark times, an increasing number of agents seek the insights of the Elendil stone, and a Company may find themselves assisting the custodian of Elostirion in arbitrating who is and is not worthy of accessing the palantír.



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## THE WHITE TOWERS

3 *Elostirion*

1 *Astirion*

### 1. ASTIRION, THE CUSTODIAN TOWER

A Company approaching the White Towers will reach Astirion, the southernmost tower, first. The Player-heroes are not likely ever to be granted access to it (unless the custodian needs their help defending it or the other towers from attack, see Braswen, below). Should they enter it, they would find a small armoury of ancient weapons immaculately maintained, a legacy of a time when the Elves were able to muster a full garrison to protect the palantír, pantries well-furnished with rations, and concealed arrow slits and other cunning defences along its height. Defenders could hold out here for a long time if necessary. On the tower's top floor are the custodian's own sleeping chambers, and above that, a beacon she can use to signal the Grey Havens if her position is threatened by the Enemy.

But before the Company can continue further on or knock at its door, they are met by Braswen, the custodian of the White Towers, who descends the steps leading to the tower's entrance to greet them.

2 *Nadirion*



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## Braswen the Custodian

Braswen is a tall and ancient Elf, with faint lines in her fair features, and grey among her blonde hair. She is weary from her long vigil, but her eyes shine an undaunted blue, for she has often seen the wondrous future that awaits her in the West through the Elendil stone.

Braswen is the sole authority on who can enter Elostirion, and the only guardian left to defend it, entrusted to this task by Círdan of the Havens himself. But her scholarly appearance hides the prowess of a formidable warrior – she fled the destruction of Beleriand, and fought against Angmar in many battles. No one who dares to trespass in her domain does so without reprisal.

Each of the White Towers has a single entrance, protected by magical seals. Braswen carries the keys that can open them with her at all times.

**OCCUPATION:** Defender, Host

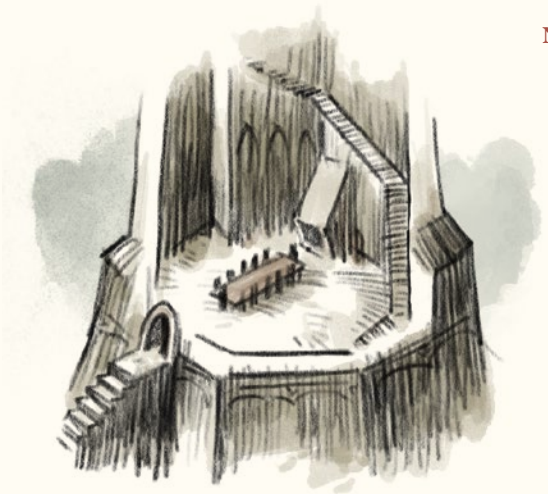
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Faithful, Wary

The Loremaster can use the following guidelines to adjudicate the reaction of Braswen, based on their most likely requests:

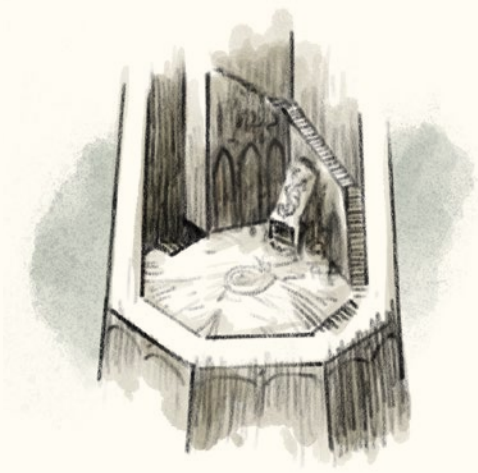
- **WE WANT TO HELP.** Braswen doesn't believe the towers are at risk of imminent attack, but three different individuals have asked to access the palantír recently, a fact that has made her suspicious. Edris of Lindon is currently occupying the Seeing Tower, and has instructed he not be disturbed — Braswen hasn't seen him in a long time, and is starting to worry. Woleth of Orthanc is hosted in the Guest Tower, impatiently awaiting her turn. Yesterday, Braswen dismissed a man of Gondor who also requested permission to consult the palantír, and she suspects he will return.
- **WE WISH TO REST AT THE GUEST TOWER.** Braswen calmly informs the Player-heroes that Nadirion is not an inn. If they are not here to see the palantír, Braswen can be convinced to allow them stay the night, but they must be gone by morning.
- **WE SEEK EDRIS OF LINDON.** The Player-heroes may be searching for Edris himself, perhaps because they were sent by his kin to discover why he has been gone so long. They must succeed at a council to convince Braswen to defy the Elf-lord's wishes to remain undisturbed.
- **WE DESIRE TO USE THE ELENDIL STONE.** Convincing Braswen to access the stone can be set up as a council — the request is outrageous, bold if the Company includes an Elf from Lindon, or even reasonable if the Player-heroes carry authorisation from a person of authority (like Círdan, or another important Patron).
- **WE MUST CONSULT THE LIBRARY OF ELOSTIRION.** This too, requires a council (bold) to convince Braswen they will not misuse the library's ancient lore, unless the Company already secured permission from the Grey Havens.

If the Company succeeds in convincing the custodian, Braswen arranges lodgings in Nadirion, the Guest Tower.

### NADIRION



*Ground Floor*



*Sleeping Chamber*



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### 2. NADIRION, THE GUEST TOWER

The easternmost of the White Towers is the shortest in height, but no less magnificent in appearance. Its chambers were once residences fit for a king, and though much of that glory has faded with age, they are still an enviable luxury to those used to resting on the roadside. Braswen will ensure her guests are well-nourished with food and drink, and can recount the history of every jewel, weapon and coat of arms displayed within Nadirion should the Player-heroes wish.

## *Woleth of Orthanc*

Hosted within the most resplendent quarters of all is a plump, middle-aged woman whose patience is rapidly becoming exhausted. Woleth arrived at the White Towers at the bidding of a Wizard, and was assured she'd be granted access to the Elendil stone as soon as the previous user's studies were completed. Two months later, no one has exited the Seeing Tower, and Woleth begins to suspect she is being deceived.

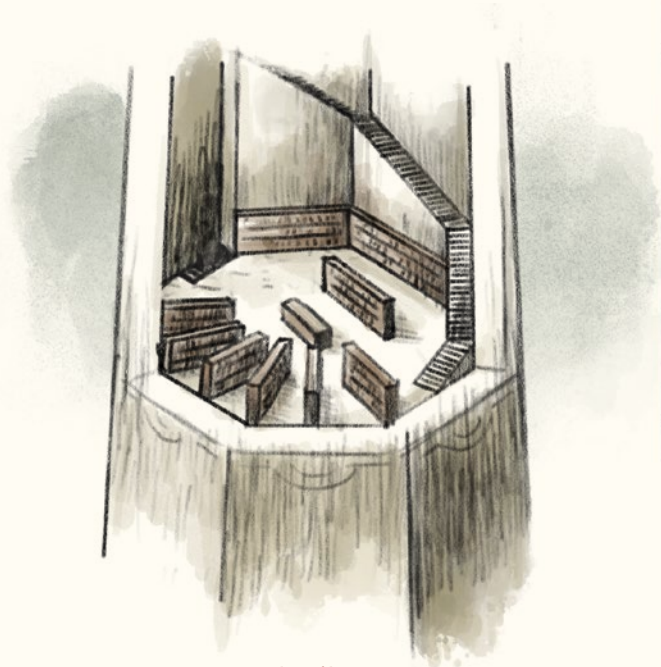
Woleth is outspoken in her criticism, subjecting Braswen to an indignant tirade if she catches sight of the custodian, which the Elf endures dispassionately. Failing that, she will rant at the Player-heroes instead. She makes it very clear she'll take her turn with the Seeing Stone before the Player-heroes do (and remains suspicious even if the Player-heroes agree). If the Player-heroes identify themselves as agents of the White Hand, she is much more forthcoming with her mission. Her master Saruman has bid her to recover whatever lore she can about the operation of the palantíri, by consulting the library of Elostirion, and looking into the Elendil stone herself. She suspects the White Wizard intends to master a palantír himself (but does not know he will use its visions to seek out Rings of Power).

If continuously frustrated in her mission, Woleth rashly decides to take matters into her own hands (see *The Folly of Woleth*, page 63).

**OCCUPATION:** Agent, Scholar

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Proud, Stern

### ELOSTIRION



*The Library*

### 3. ELOSTIRION, THE SEEING TOWER

The westernmost tower is the tallest and most fabled: Elostirion, house of the Elendil stone. The Company must reach the top of the hill to reach the door, which looks sturdier than those of the other towers. Edris of Lindon has been studying in Elostirion for many moons, with explicit instructions to remain undisturbed. When leading the Company to the tower, Braswen is visibly uneasy, disturbed both to defy the Elf-lord's instructions, and by the state she might find him in.

**THE LIBRARY:** Several floors of the Seeing Tower are given over to an extensive library, containing accounts of all who have peered into the Elendil stone, and what they learned from the experience. Annals of kings, queens and Elven lords, recorded by generations of custodians, can be found within this priceless archive.

It is possible that among these records are the accounts of those who attempted to turn the stone's gaze away from the Undying Lands, and even succeeded. This is the secret knowledge that is coveted by others of similar mind, but it is not easily found.



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## *Edris of Lindon*

The library is where the Company first encounters Edris of Lindon. The Elven lore-master is in no great shape — he is worryingly thin, murmuring to himself, and darting from tome to tome with feverish intensity. He has been frustrated by many failures to master the palantír, but he is most haunted by his scant successes. Whenever he has managed to turn the palantír's vision away from the West, to reconnect with the other Seeing Stones, he has been tormented with visions of a lidless, burning eye, and the unstoppable power at its command. Rather than flee across the sea to avoid this terrible evil, Edris has somehow convinced himself that by gaining full control of the Elendil stone he might save his beloved Middle-earth. In his desperate state, he suspects any who interfere with his work to be servants of the Enemy.

Edris rages at anyone who interrupts his study, and forbids the Player-heroes from accessing the palantír until his work is concluded. Though discomforted, Braswen suggests the Company acquiesces to the Elf-lord's demands. If the Player-heroes are not deterred, see *The Sorrow of Edris*, page 63.

**OCCUPATION:** Despairing lore-master

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Lordly, Scornful

## ELOSTIRION

*The Seeing Room*

**THE SEEING ROOM:** The very top of Elostirion is a magnificent terrace, with a view as stunning as any to be found in Eriador. One storey below the terrace is a room containing the means to see beyond the borders of Middle-earth itself — this is the Seeing Room, the housing of the Elendil stone. Hallowed silence hangs over the dim chamber when the palantír is not in use.

### MASTERING THE PALANTÍR

A Player-hero who enters the Seeing Room may elect to search for visions in the Elendil stone. Attempting to use the palantír always requires a WISDOM roll.

- If the seer is looking towards the distant West, a successful roll awards a vision of a soothing paradise. The Player-hero regains 1 Hope, plus 1 additional Hope for each ᘔ rolled. A Player-hero can only gain the benefit of this vision once each Adventuring Phase.
- If the Player-hero attempts to turn the palantír's vision away from the Uttermost West, their WISDOM roll is *Ill-favoured*. If they succeed, they cannot choose what they see, but instead gain a brief, soundless vision, concerning a present or future threat to Eriador and Lindon in particular — the Loremaster can use this to show a vision related to one of the coming events described in the chapter *A Gathering Storm* (see page 31). Success icons (ᘔ) may be spent to magnify specific details.
- However, using the Seeing Stone to look away from the West quickly draws the attention of the Great Eye, which assaults the seer's mind with terrible images. The seer gains 4 Shadow points (Dread), before immediately breaking contact with the palantír.



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The palantír is a perfect sphere of smooth black stone, about a foot in diameter, with no imperfection to mar its surface. It is mounted upon an intricately carved pedestal in the centre of the room, with the space around the palantír cleared to allow a viewer to approach from any angle. Were a seer to approach from the eastern side of the room, and attune themselves with the Elendil stone, they would see visions of distant Valinor dance upon the face of the palantír. Seen from the other direction, the Elendil stone remains an impassive, impenetrable black — though many are intent to pierce this veil through occult means.

## Schemes and Trouble

### The Greed of Cirzor

At any point when the Company is visiting the towers, a newcomer may arrive requesting access to the Elendil stone. Braswen recognises this individual as Cirzor, a man of the south, whom she refused on a previous occasion. If Cirzor meets the Player-heroes, he will petition them for aid, hoping they can vouch for him with the custodian. He'll even offer to pay them with a ruby gem, a Precious Object worth 4 Treasure points, in return for helping him enter Elostirion.

Cirzor is tall, rugged and handsome, superficially charming, and always inquisitive about the Player-heroes' own exploits. He claims to have been sent by the Steward of Gondor, seeking palantír-lore that can re-establish a direct channel of communication between the north and south. In truth, he is a Black Númenórean Spy (see page 37), with instructions to use the palantír to discern the true location of Rivendell.

If Cirzor continues to be rebuffed, he turns vicious, and swears the Company will regret crossing him. He later returns with a warband of Black Númenórean Soldiers and hired Ruffians, intent on forcing his way into the towers. During the fighting — or at any time when Braswen and the Company are distracted — he attempts to discreetly steal the custodian's keys, and escape with the palantír.

### The Sorrow of Edris

Whatever Edris is telling himself, there is no vision to glean from turning the Elendil stone eastwards that can settle his troubled mind. Convincing the Elven lore-master of this fact, though, is no easy task.

> Persuading Edris to abandon his studies, and return to the care of his kin in Lindon, can be resolved as a bold council, with Edris' mania making him reluctant and thus causing all Player-heroes to *lose (1d)*.

If Edris' mind is not settled whilst the Company are staying at the White Towers, the nightmarish visions of Sauron push him into hopelessness. He carries the Elendil stone to the Seeing Tower's terrace, and throws himself over the edge to his death. Though the palantír is undamaged by the fall, Edris' blood seeps into its surface, cloaking all visions of Valinor for the next twenty years or longer.

### The Folly of Woleth

Whilst Woleth is not a cruel-hearted woman, she is entirely committed to her mission for the White Wizard, and is not above using subterfuge to get what she wants. Timed to coincide with other unfortunate events, she can become a serious nuisance.

If the Player-heroes have negotiated access to the Elendil stone before Woleth, she is visibly furious. Whilst she cannot physically prevent the Company from entering the tower, she will conspire to impede them — driving a wedge between the Company and Braswen, encouraging Edris to believe the Player-heroes are unwelcome, or setting fires elsewhere in the Tower Hills so the Company will be forced to waste time investigating.

Woleth will not fight with or against Cirzor, but will gladly use the battle as an opportunity to sneak into the tower. The agent has been given a clever tool by Saruman that allows her to pick the lock to the Seeing Tower, as a method of last resort. Once inside Elostirion, Woleth will use the palantír, or steal from its library, depending on what she has time for. Fighting with Cirzor, or Edris, is not unlikely, as the spectre of violence unfolding beneath the tower infects the minds of the scholars as well. Unless supported, Woleth will perish in these confrontations.



ej kong (Order: 36612205)

# The Tree of Sorrow

*"I do not doubt there is some shadow of the Great Darkness lying there… and bad memories are handed down."*

### RUMOUR

*"There's a sacred tree deep in the woods of Eryn Vorn, and the Tree-folk worship it. They take captives on their raids, and bring these prisoners back to the tree as sacrifices. If you find that any of your kinfolk are missing after a raid, then weep — they are already as good as dead, for no one has ever returned from the dark places of the wood."*

### OLD LORE

*"This is one of the most obscure and forgotten spots in all of Middle-earth. This is a primordial forest, older than the Misty Mountains. Only wild Men and wilder trees ever dwelt here. Thus, even the Wise know little of Eryn Vorn, save that it is a dark and ill-omened name, and that the might of Númenor that humbled even Sauron could not pierce the shadows of the trees."*

## Background

In the days of Cardolan, a few of the King's Rangers did enter the wood, and they mapped parts of the forest. Their records may be preserved in Rivendell, or in the library at Tharbad.

Once, there was a single forest from West to East, from the Blue Mountains to the banks of the Anduin. Of it, Greenwood the Great was but a pale shadow, and Fangorn Forest just the east end. The westernmost portion of the forest, on the cape of Eryn Vorn, had a bad reputation even then. It is as though something seeped in from Outside when the world was young, or there was some sourness in the earth that the trees drew up through their roots. It has always been dark beneath the trees in Eryn Vorn.

The world changed. Men came with axes and fire, and brought an end to the endless forest. The folk who dwelt in the woods retreated as the land was cleared, falling back as one thicket and the next were taken by the axe. There were Men in the wood then, the fathers of the fathers of the Tree-folk, but there were Ents too, shepherds of the trees — and neither had the strength to stop the tree-hunger of Númenor.

By the time Númenor sank and the world changed again, both Ents and Men had unwisely taken refuge in the haunted cape.

The Tree of Sorrow grows there, the last redoubt of the forest folk. It is a huge tree, warped and swollen beyond the natural size of its kind. From a distance, it resembles a hunched giant, a black cloak of leaves wrapped around its massive shoulders as protection from the cold sea-winds, its face mercifully hidden from sight. The tree seems to almost swell as the traveller approaches it, a living mountain of tangled greenery. The details shift as the wind rustles the leaves — there's a bundle of bloodless bodies, hanging from a branch like grisly fruit. There's a face, and another and another, staring out of the gnarled trunk. There are ladders, walkways, tree-houses, a whole host of foes amid the branches.

Walk closer still, and the traveller sees that the Tree itself straddles a rocky outcrop, and there are cave mouths amid the dark roots. There's an open glade before the tree, and a ring of ancient stones where the Tree-folk gather for their strange ceremonies. A traveller can see, too, that the Tree is not a single entity, but a mingling of smaller trees, all fused into one monstrosity.

Here is evil in the wood.

### JOURNEY EVENTS

Captives taken by the Tree-folk of Eryn Vorn are brought to this cursed place. The Tree-folk are sometimes cruel enough to leave a trail for rescuers to follow, a bloody path of severed fingers and other tokens, a trail that a Company of Player-heroes might pick up in the course of their adventures. This is, of course, a ruse to ambush those following the trail – it winds through the wood, passing through many perils and dark patches, and by the time it reaches the Tree of Sorrow, the would-be rescuers are so exhausted and battered that they are easy prey.

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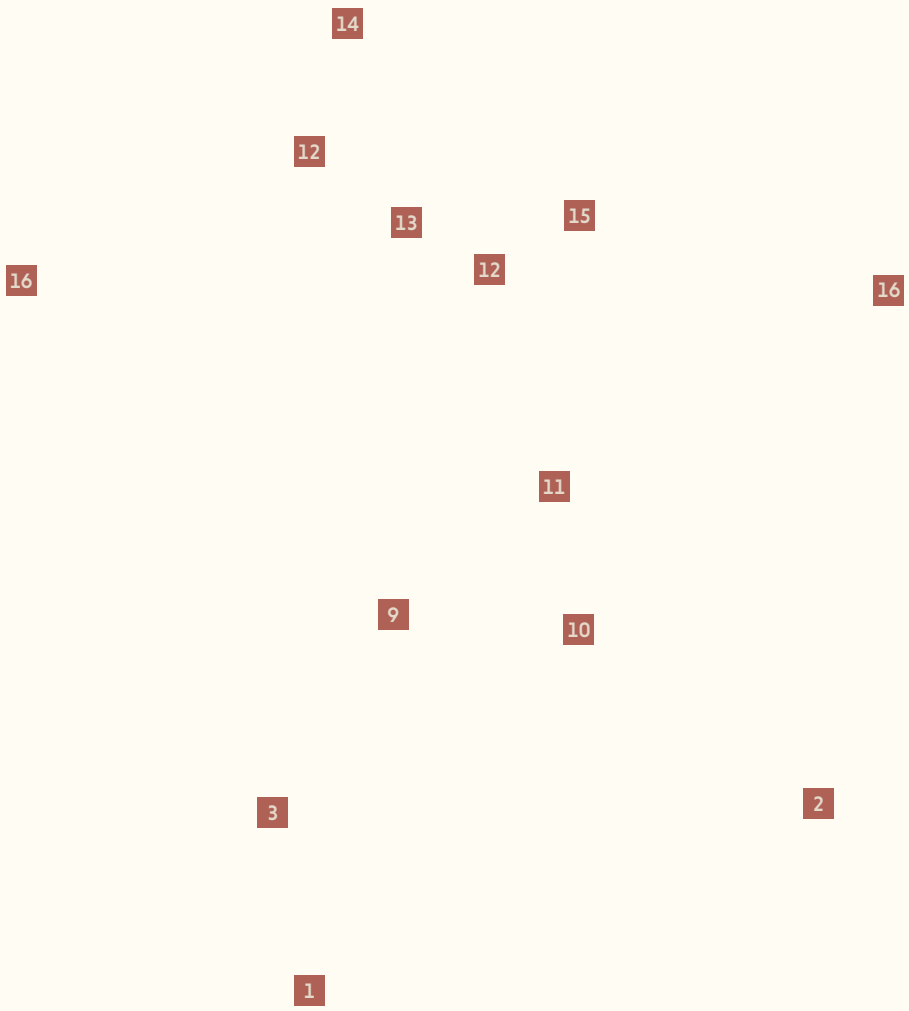
## THE TREE OF SORROW



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## LOCATIONS

According to most tales, the Tree of Sorrow stands in the south-east part of the forest. It rises above the rest of the wood, and can be seen from a distance. That said, older accounts place the Tree of Sorrow further to the north. These old tales must be mistaken, of course — trees, even haunted evil ones, don't get up and walk.

The easiest way to get to the Tree of Sorrow is to be taken captive by the Tree-folk. They will bring you there swiftly, though your journey will not be a comfortable one — your hands will be bound with strong ropes, and you'll be scourged or beaten until you run, scrambling over the rough ground of Minhiriath until you come to the shadowy eaves of Eryn Vorn. Hands will grab you then, strong hands that lift you and carry you through the dark paths until you come to the tree — and there you shall die, as a stone knife slits your throat and you are hung upside down so your blood drains into the thirsty soil.

The more arduous (but less doomed) path is to travel through the woods of Eryn Vorn. Just traversing this forest is an adventure in itself; while the cape is not especially large, the forest is thick and tangled, hostile and pathless. It's much worse than either the Old Forest or Mirkwood — this forest has gone untamed and unchallenged for thousands of years, and those who dwell here cultivate the elemental darkness of the wood. You are not welcome here.

### 1. THE GLADE

The earth in this open glade is churned up by the passage of many feet, for here the folk of the dark woods gather. Drums in the tree-tops summon them when it is time to feast together, to hunt together, or march to war together.

### 2. THE STANDING STONES

Six stones, arranged in a circle. These stones were not raised by the folk of the forest; they are much, much older. They must have been carved by the Elves in the days before the Sun, and what messages they left are now too worn to be read.

Stand in the centre of the circle under the night sky, and you can see stars that are normally only visible from the shores of the Blessed Realm. The astrologers and skygazers of Arnor would have learned much wisdom, had they ever found this place.

### 3. THE CAVES

A warren of caves runs below the Tree of Sorrow. Some are used by the Tree-folk as cellars, the cool air preserving food they've gathered.

Drawings on the cave walls depict the history of the Tree-folk. Images show them hunting in the primal woods, show the fathers of the fathers of Men skulking on the fringes of the forest, looking enviously at the Elves of old with their shining swords and bright mail. Some drawings show dark mountains under a dark sky, and whips of flame: memories of the wars with Morgoth, long, long ago.

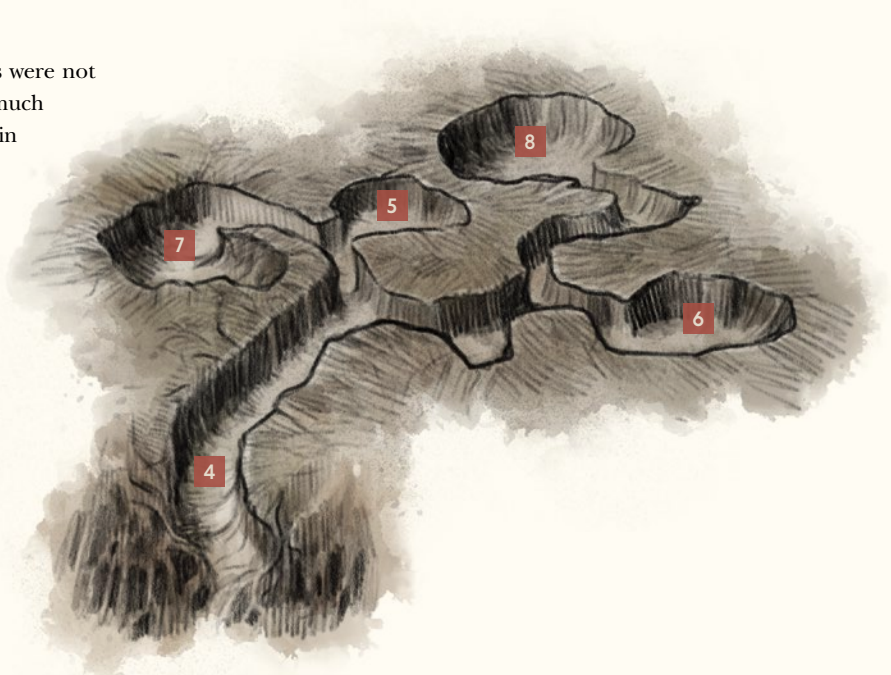
More recent — but still ancient! — drawings show the Men of Númenor coming with their mighty ships, and laying waste to the forest. There are many images of armies driving the Tree-folk deeper into the woods, of towering fortresses like leering monsters. A close examination of some of the drawings shows giant figures in the background, blending in with the trees.

### 4. THE SENTRY POST

Tree-folk warriors matching the Player-heroes in number are always on guard here.

### *Tree-folk Warriors*

**These evil Men dwell in the deep forest, and hate and fear outsiders. While in these fallen years they resemble the Drúedain of the woods in the south, they are in fact descended from the same folk as the ancestors of the Númenoreans. They are long of limb and strong of body, and have become very wood-crafty over the centuries. They wear little armour, but paint their bodies in mud and crushed leaves to blend in with the dark shadows of the forest.**




THE CAVES



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**TREE-FOLK WARRIOR**
Nimble, Ferocious

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 4

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | 1 | 4 | +2 | 1 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Spear 3 (4/14, Pierce), Bow 3 (3/14, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Poison*. If an attack results in a Wound, the target is also poisoned (see page 134 of *The One Ring* for the effects of poison).

*Snake-like Speed*. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

### 5. THE SECRET WELL

This deep well reaches down to a pool of icy water. The priests of the wood know how to mix this water with tree-sap and certain plants to brew up foul draughts, similar to the Ent-draughts of Fangorn Forest.

**TAINTED DRAUGHTS:** There are a number of clay jars full of liquid in this chamber. If drunk, the liquid tastes vile and bitter, but also eerily energising. The jars contain a number of draughts equal to twice the number of Player-heroes in the Company.

The effects of the draughts are beneficial in the short term, but poisonous in the long one. The benefits listed below last for one season, while the drawbacks are permanent.

**BENEFITS:**

- The imbiber may choose to gain 1 Shadow when spending Hope on a Protection roll to be Inspired for that roll.
- The imbiber may choose to gain 1 Shadow to regain Endurance equal to their Strength or Heart score, whichever is higher.
- The imbiber may choose to gain 1 Shadow to remove the effects of any poison they are suffering from.

**DRAWBACKS:**

- Whoever gains 3 Shadow points during the same Adventuring Phase to enjoy the benefits of the draughts notices their skin is starting to harden into bark, and that their blood is turning thick and greenish. Their features slowly return to normal if they do not drink from the tainted draughts for an entire following Adventuring Phase.
- Whoever gains 6 or more Shadow points in the course of two consecutive Adventuring Phases dies a painful death, as roots burst from their bellies. If not burned or otherwise destroyed, their corpses will become rooted trees.

### 6. THE PIT OF BROKEN THINGS

This cave is where the Tree-folk cast all the things they deem unclean, things taken from the Númenóreans and their descendants in Arnor. The floor of the cave is covered with bones, rusted fragments of metal, scraps of cloth and other debris. The trash-piles heave with worms that feed on the remains. A thorough search of this cave may turn up some ancient weapons or treasures that are still intact, but digging through the physical waste of centuries of grudges takes time.

### 7. THE SHUNNED CAVE

This cave winds down into the earth, and the air surging out of it smells chilly and foul. None of the Tree-folk dare to explore this tunnel branch, so they shun it and do not go this way.

This is the source of the evil power that fuels the Tree of Sorrow.

#### INTO THE SHUNNED CAVE

Unknown even to the Tree-folk priests, the cave descends in unbroken spiral for miles, to a bottom beyond light and knowledge. There, among the uttermost foundations of the earth something lies, trapped, or slumbering. A Nameless Thing, certainly, whose malevolence is so great that it taints the surface. Is this a foe beyond any in the Company?

If the Player-heroes attempt to follow the tunnel they soon realise that the underground passage extends for miles on end (a Dwarf can tell this right away), and that they risk being buried alive by the Tree-folk, should they discover their intrusion.

Fully exploring the Shunned Cave and facing what lies beneath is probably a matter for further adventures, once the Tree-folk have been dealt with...



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### 8. THE CAVE OF THUNIR

The darkness is thicker in this vast hollow than elsewhere, and the roots of the trees line the cave as pillars in a cathedral. In the farthest recess of the grotto is a crack in the rock — it is here that the monster Thunir slumbers, like a spider in its lair.

## *Thunir Blood-drinker*

When Sauron went to war against the Elves of Hollin, the hated Men of Númenor fought against the Dark Lord. A few warriors from Eryn Vorn, therefore, joined with Sauron's armies for the chance to fight and kill their ancient foes from the West. Thunir was among them, and he was the only one to return from the war.

That was four thousand years ago, and Thunir still lives.

A champion of his folk, Thunir drew unnatural strength and resilience from the tainted draughts brewed by the priests of Eryn Vorn. While most of those who used it died a painful death, Thunir lived on, every year becoming more and more as one with the Tree of Sorrow. Now, he is a shambling horror, more tree than man, driven by the dim memory of hatred. The priests tend to him, and know the secret words to awaken his wrath.

**THUNIR**
Pitiless, Savage

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 6

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50 | 2 | 6 | – | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Crush 4 (6/12, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fear of Fire*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is engaged in close combat with an adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Hideous Toughness*. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Horrible Strength*. If the creature scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

*Thick Hide*. Spend 1 Hate point to gain (2d) on a Protection roll.

### A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH

Player-heroes who abuse the tainted draughts of Eryn Vorn face certain death... unless they choose to remain in Eryn Vorn and become a guardian of the Tree of Sorrow.

At the Loremaster discretion, a Player-hero who is about to suffer the dire consequences of imbibing too much of the cursed drink may feel the irresistible call to return to the Tree of Sorrow. Once there, they will discover the bitter truth – stay in the forest and become an undying monster like Thunir, or die.

### 9. THE FUSED GIANTS

At the foot of the Tree of Sorrow are several shapes that might have once been of man-shape, or might have been smaller trees, now fused into the mighty trunk. Their arms are upraised, their feet lost amid the roots. According to the tales of the Tree-folk, these are the Walking Trees, but they walk no more — they slumber here, their spirits mingling, while they wait for the changing of the Age.

### 10. LADDERS

These ladders are for the use of the old, the infirm, or the heavily burdened; other Tree-folk are agile as squirrels, able to scamper up the trunk without difficulty.

### 11. SENTRY POST

A second sentry post, with at least two Tree-folk per Player-hero on watch (see page 66).

### 12. PRISON CELLS

Prisoners taken by the Tree-folk are held here in wicker cages.

### 13. THE CLEFT

This wound in the side of the Tree of Sorrow was opened when the tree bent in the face of a terrible thunderstorm in 2910. The priests believe that they must offer regular sacrifices of blood to heal the wound in the tree-trunk. If one were intent on destroying the Tree of Sorrow, the rotten wood of the Cleft is the place to lay one's axe or flame.

### 14. THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING PRIESTS

The priests of the Tree-folk dwell in this house amid the branches. All the Tree-folk priests are male; they hold that they are vessels for the spirits of all the priests who have gone



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before them, and that each of them is, like the tree, a single creature made of many parts. The other Tree-folk both revere and fear them, for the living priests can do whatever they wish without reprisal in Eryn Vorn.

The house is where the priests brew their draughts; fungi sprout profusely on the surrounding branches. It's also where they bless the weapons of the Tree-folk; they smear poison on the spear-tips, making them deadly even if a foe is merely scratched.

**TREE-FOLK PRIESTS:** The heathen priests of the Tree-folk practise a bizarre religion, combining parts of other faiths. They do not know the Valar, save through fleeting contacts with dying and rotten Ents, and so learned to worship nature. In later years, they fell even deeper into darkness, for emissaries of Sauron went to them to rally them against the Númenóreans, and now they worship the Enemy as the King of Death. The priests believe themselves to be exempt from mortality, and that when they lie down to 'sleep' they pass on their essence through the trees so that they reincarnate in new bodies.

### 15. THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD PRIESTS

The bodies of the dead priests are not hung from the branches of woe, as is done with intruders; nor are they buried or left on the ground to be eaten by carrion birds and animals, as is done with the honoured and shameful dead respectively. Instead, the dead priests are tied to the tree, so that over time moss and bark grow over them, and their remains are absorbed into the living tree. Therefore, the branches are full of knots and whorls that bear an eerie resemblance to human faces, staring out from the wood.

### 16. THE BRANCHES OF WOE

Prisoners of the Tree-folk are executed here, hung upside-down from branches more than two hundred feet above the ground. The priests typically cut the throats of their victims, but sometimes torment prisoners for days by dangling them over the abyss without killing them. The bodies of the dead are left to rot here, so these branches throng with carrion-eating birds and insects.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### PERILS OF THE TREE OF SORROW

The Tree of Sorrow is dimly awake and aware, much like Old Man Willow in the Old Forest, but larger and more hateful — and much, much thirstier. Those attempting to climb the Tree of Sorrow face unexpected perils, such as:

#### HEALING THE WOODS

The wood was wounded long long ago, by the cruel greed of Númenor; it will not be healed for many centuries, if ever. However, heroes could start this process. Perhaps the Tree of Sorrow might be helped by destroying the monster Thunir, and by sealing the dark pit amid its roots. The Player-heroes can do something, but they will most likely need help — for example, it might take the wisdom of one of the Shepherds of the Trees to cure this blighted forest.

Could the heroes seek out one of the legendary Ents of Fangorn, and bring it across the tree-desert of the Enedwaith to the cape of Eryn Vorn?

- **A TASTE FOR BLOOD:** The evil of the tree seeps into those who climb it. A Player-hero who is already Miserable must face a Shadow test (**VALOUR**); failure triggers a bout of madness.
- **BRANCHES LIKE ARMS:** A branch swings or breaks unexpectedly, and threatens to strike an intruder. The character must pass an **AWARENESS** test or be struck for a grievous Endurance loss.
- **CRACKS IN THE BARK:** A crack threatens to catch a Player-hero's foot in a vice-like grip. A **SCAN** test lets the lead Player-hero avoid such peril; otherwise, an unlucky Player-hero blunders into the crack; they are trapped and cannot move.
- **EYES IN THE WOOD:** The tree sprouts little white balls of fungus that look alarmingly like eyes. Intruders must pass a **STEALTH** test or be spotted — and the tree summons the Tree-folk sentries by creaking in agitation.
- **GATHERING GLOOM:** Any foes encountered on the Tree of Sorrow gain 2 bonus points of Hate.
- **STRANGLING VINES:** Creepers hanging from the branches above somehow become wrapped around the Player-hero's arm — or neck. The character must succeed at an **ATHLETICS** test or lose their weapon (or, if strangled, suffer a moderate Endurance loss every round until rescued).
- **TREACHEROUS FOOTING:** Slick moss on the branches makes for a dangerous place to fight. Any Player-hero that rolls an either loses their action — or falls to their death.



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# The Shrouded Islets

*"We live now upon an island amid many perils…"*

### RUMOUR

*"A few months ago, a group of Dúnedain was seen taking boats out onto Lake Evendim, carrying many supplies. No one has heard from them since. Some say that small islands lie in the middle of the lake, concealed by the mists blanketing its surface for most of the year. Who knows what treasures an explorer might find there, untouched for centuries?"*

### OLD LORE

*"The islets in Lake Evendim were inhabited by the Men of Arnor, in the heyday of Annúminas. They built lake-houses there, a comfortable retreat from the bustle of the city. Then, from all records it seems that news from those who settled on the lake stopped reaching Annúminas years before the city was abandoned."*

## Background

The Shrouded Islets are the subject of several ghost stories told among the Rangers of the North. Before the fading of Annúminas, they were a convenient stopping point in the middle of Lake Evendim for noble families to retreat to nature, or Fisher-folk to repair damaged boats. But the settlement was undone by the coming of a horrible creature called forth by Sauron to assault the folk of Arnor, and the disappearance of the settlers was never explained.

3 *The Last Stand*

5 *The Grey Spire*

4 *The Bleak Cove*

### THE SHROUDED ISLETS

1 *The Wrecking Cross*



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### WHEN WINTER FIRST BEGINS TO BITE...

If the Company visits the Shrouded Islets in winter, Loremasters should keep in mind the harsher weather conditions of the expedition, for example applying penalties to die rolls that may be made harder by the adverse circumstances, or taking into consideration the consequences of being immersed in frigid waters (Sources of Injury, page 133 of *The One Ring*).

Last, but not least, the Dúnedain described in *The Last Stand* (see below) are found in an even more terrible state, on the verge of freezing to death. HEALING rolls may be required before they can provide information to the Company.

In recent times, a group of Dúnedain of the North resolved to discover the truth, but they also disappeared without a trace. Unfortunately for them, the Doom of Nenuial still infests the waters around the Shrouded Islets, a creature still obeying the commands it received centuries before from the Dark Lord.

2 *The False Haven*

## LOCATIONS

The waters of Lake Evendim are cold, still, foreboding, and deep. Unless approached at the height of summer, thick mist settles over its surface, obscuring vision and muffling all sounds. Reaching the islets requires boats, except in deep winter, when the waters of Lake Evendim freeze over, allowing for a safe, if cautious, crossing.

### 1. THE WRECKING CROSS

This is the first islet encountered by a Company crossing from the south-east. It is a cross-shaped islet, bordered by harsh rocks cleaving the lake's surface. If the Player-heroes observe the island from a distance, they don't spot anything of interest, beyond lichen, mayflies, and what could be the remains of an earlier vessel close to its shore. Attempting to disembark means taking a foolish risk that may end in disaster, as the submerged rocks can easily smash their vessels to pieces.

### 2. THE FALSE HAVEN

Just beyond the Wrecking Cross is a more hospitable islet, with a small sandy beach that can be safely approached. If the Player-heroes scout the rest of the islets before attempting landfall, they can reasonably conclude the beach is the easiest spot to land (the exploring Dúnedain did the same).

The island is low and exposed to the winds, and is almost completely covered by short yew trees, and dense shrubs of holly. A small area along the shore has been cleared fairly recently, and some traces from the Dúnedain expedition can be found buried in the sand — a store of firewood, and some spoiled food, signs of a camp that was abandoned hastily.

**THE VILLA:** If the Player-heroes reach the middle of the island, they find the ruins of an ancient lake villa, almost entirely reclaimed by nature. From its size and position, knowledgeable Player-heroes may deduce the building was once the residence of a local noble of a certain relevance.

### 3. THE LAST STAND

A smaller, less welcoming islet looms over the False Haven. It emerges from the waters looking like a round, barren hill, with a rocky shore and a small, sheltered cove along its southern border — the only obvious landing for boats.

Once there, the Company may be surprised to find that the islet hides a network of tunnels under its surface, and that it is there that the Dúnedain survivors have found refuge.

**THE DÚNEDAIN EXPLORERS:** The Dúnedain group of survivors is composed of about half a dozen families. They left their homes almost two months ago, with the intention to explore and settle the Shrouded Islets. They were attacked



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by the Doom of Nenuial shortly after their arrival, and have since then endured its onslaught on a regular basis. They suffered many casualties, and are currently in a wretched state: trapped, starving, and nursing serious injuries.

When the Company arrives, they are met by Celerwen, a limping, ashen-faced woman who inherited the position of leader in the group after the recent death of the previous chieftain, Targon. If the Player-heroes have not already encountered the Doom of Nenuial, she explains what they've let themselves in for — a horrible creature counts the islets as its dominion, an ancient terror she can only assume destroyed the colony centuries ago.

If the Player-heroes let her, Celerwen continues, and narrates what happened to the survivors. When they reached the islets, the monster waited until they had settled upon the False Haven. Then, it attacked them on the shore. Targon faced the creature with a group of chosen men, allowing the others to flee and repair to this islet, which they called the Last Stand. Targon and his men headed towards another islet on the chieftain's boat, drawing the monster away from the others — they succeeded and the monster followed them to the Bleak Cove, where they all died fighting.

Before the Player-heroes arrived, Celerwen's plan was to wait for her kin to recover from their wounds, before attempting one last break for freedom — the monster sunk all their boats but one, the one that Targon used to reach the Bleak Cove. In her heart, Celerwen expected the next fight to be their last, but now the Company has brought her new hope.

Celerwen describes the monster as devious and sadistic, as it didn't attack them as they approached the islets, but aggressively hunted them once they arrived and when they attempted to leave.

### *Celerwen, Daughter of Celegond*

**OCCUPATION:** Ranger, Survivor

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Honourable, Patient

#### 4. THE BLEAK COVE

This islet is the largest of the group. Here, the vegetation hides the ruins of several dwellings, the remains of houses that saw many generations living their lives in the time of the realm of Arnor. A wide cove allows for easy landing, and stone pillars indicate where piers used to extend from the shore. The boat that Targon used to reach the islet is still moored here — the monster didn't sink it when it killed the chieftain and his men, maybe leaving it as bait for the remaining survivors.

If the Player-heroes explore The Bleak Cove before The Last Stand, it could be the first evidence they find of the Dúnedain expedition. The boat moored there is battered, but intact enough to withstand the journey back to dry land. The damage is clearly the result of a savage assault, warning of a danger that lurks beneath the water's surface.

#### 5. THE GREY SPIRE

The central islet of the group overlooks all the others, a fang of rock inhospitable to all life but the most persistent moss. Near the top, light catches on a reflective rock, a large quartz that could be a natural formation, or might have been placed there on purpose, as a landmark for boatmen approaching in the mist.

The peak of the Grey Spire is the only part of the Shrouded Islets the lake monster cannot reach to attack. It offers a commanding view of the nearby area, for example revealing the refuge of the Dúnedain survivors on the Last Stand, and offering a vantage position for an archer targeting the monster. Reaching the top is a daunting climb though, and a dangerous one.

## Schemes and Trouble

### LOST IN THE FOG

Depending on the season, the danger posed by the obscuring fog can be an ever-present threat. If the mist is thick and the Player-heroes become separated, it is easy for individual adventurers to lose their bearings, or be carried much further from the rest of the Company than intended. There is something especially beguiling about this fog — stories allege the mist is magical in origin, summoned by the High Men to preserve the ancient treasures of Arnor from tomb robbers. To be lost in its depths is to encounter a force that feels altogether more malevolent than protective.

> The mist is especially dangerous to the Player-heroes when they are preyed upon by the Doom of Nenuial. The creature is intelligent, and will specifically time its attacks to coincide with moments when the Company is divided and disoriented.

### *The Doom of Nenuial, Lake Monster*

The Doom of Nenuial is a hideous creature, looking like a misshapen deep-sea fish, with a huge gaping mouth filled with row upon row of sharp fangs. Multiple small, blind eyes surmount its head, and a single horn protrudes from its snout, ending in a luminescent lure that the creature uses to attract its prey when hunting.



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For a thousand years, the monster hid beneath the bottom of Lake Evendim in lightless tunnels, until it was called forth by the Shadow to bring death to the sailors of Annúminas. Since the fall of Arnor, it has hungered to taste the flesh of High Men again, and the arrival of the Dúnedain explorers has enlivened it for the first time in centuries. It is content to savour this treat, dragging out the demise of the Dúnedain over many months. If deprived of its meal, its retaliation will be terrible indeed.

The Loremaster is free to time the attacks of the Doom of Nenuial as best suits the pacing of the Adventuring Phase. In general, the monster likes to play with its prey, attacking when least expected, only to leave suddenly. The monster is more at ease in the water, but can propel itself ashore using its powerful tail, and also move ponderously upon land, using its hand-like clawed fins.

**THE DOOM OF NENUIAL**
Cunning, Territorial

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 10

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 3 | 10 | – | 4 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Bite 3 (8/14, Pierce), Tail 3 (10/12, Break Shield)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Aquatic*. All rolls are *Ill-favoured* while on land.

*Denizen of the Dark.* All rolls are *Favoured* while in darkness.

*Fear of Fire*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is engaged in close combat with an adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

*Hates Sunlight*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

*Hideous Toughness*. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Snake-like Speed*. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*. The Doom of Nenuial can use this Fell Ability only while in the water.

### FIGHTING IN THE WATER

Player-heroes swimming in armour suffer a serious penalty: all ATHLETICS rolls made to stay afloat or swim *lose* a number of dice equal to the Protection rating of any armour worn.

Additionally, Player-heroes fighting while swimming are *severely hindered*, while those near the shore or standing on submerged rocks are only *moderately hindered*.

### ROUGH WATERS

Whenever the Doom of Nenuial appears, the still waters of the lake become suddenly tempestuous. Rocking waves, animated by the motion of the creature's massive tail and fins, threaten to capsize boats or smash them into nearby rocks. This threat is resolved in the Opening Volleys phase, specifically targeting Player-heroes in a boat or swimming between the islets.

Each Player-hero in a boat must make an ATHLETICS roll. If they fail, they fall overboard, and begin the fight in the water (see box). During combat, climbing back aboard a boat, or onto a nearby islet, requires another ATHLETICS roll and uses a main action. While in the water, Player-heroes cannot use ranged weapons.



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# TINDAILIN — AN ELVEN REFUGE

*"Much evil must befall a country before it wholly forgets the Elves, if once they dwelt there."*

### RUMOUR

*"Near Sarn Ford is a wood that was once inhabited by Elves: they loved to carouse around its pond, looking at the reflection of the moon and stars upon its surface. It was a magical place once… but today it's a haunted forest. Nobody sets foot in it anymore, and the Elves themselves keep away from it; what is it that hides in the lake that scares them so?"*

### OLD LORE

*"Northwest of Sarn Ford lies what remains of an Elven refuge, protected by a wood in the centre of which is a small lake. Its foundation dates back to ancient times, and it is said that it was originally blessed with a guardian spirit. Unfortunately, its original splendour was marred by a terrible battle against the Shadow, and since then the place has never been the same; in time, it was completely abandoned."*

## BACKGROUND

Sarn Ford has always been a strategic place for defence against threats coming from the south, and the Rangers of the North keep it under constant watch. Centuries ago the Elves established one of their refuges in a copse of trees west of the river, to enjoy some rest on their way to the Grey Havens. They called it Tindailin, "glinting lake".

Beneath the waters of the small lake in the centre of the refuge lived Herunen, a minor servitor spirit belonging to the host of the Lord of Waters, one of the Valar. The spirit came to dwell there as he was attracted by the craftsmanship of the Elves, and was fascinated by any object with an unusual or particularly beautiful shape. In time, Herunen became a close friend of Thalion, an Elven explorer and a veteran of many battles. Thalion shared Herunen's love for crafting things, and spent long hours on the shores of the lake, giving shape to many objects made of wood.

Then, hard days came: the Enemy brought war to Eriador, and rumours of armies marching towards Sarn Ford multiplied. Before a scouting mission, Mirwen, Thalion's companion, begged him to stay away from battle: Thalion had already given enough to war, she said. He promised, and sent her away for safety.

Once she left, things fell apart: the armies of the Enemy reached Sarn Ford unexpectedly and Thalion was forced to break his promise. He entered the fray, only to be injured so badly that he had to leave Middle-earth immediately and pass across the Sea. He left a message for Mirwen — a silver and emerald bracelet, and a request to join him quickly. This message was entrusted to Herunen, who undertook to keep it until the arrival of Mirwen.

But when Mirwen found out that a battle had been fought so close to the refuge and that Thalion had ignored her request not to fight, she was greatly distressed and felt betrayed. She chose to forget both her beloved Thalion and Tindailin, and she never returned to the place where they had spent so many happy moments together…

In the pond, Herunen waited for years for Mirwen to come, listening to the voices of the creatures that lived in the waters and in the woods. In time, he realised that Mirwen would never return and that she had abandoned his friend Thalion. The anger that arose from the thought of this betrayal was such that it reverberated in nature around Herunen, slowly turning Tindailin into a dark place, an area hostile to all living beings, especially Elves.

## LOCATIONS

Sarn Ford lies on the road that reaches the Greenway from the Shire, a crossing on the Brandywine river that connects the Southfarthing to the south of Eriador.

About two miles north of the ford, just under half a mile west of the river, the trees thicken to form a dense, impenetrable grove. Just outside the edge of the wood there is a small camp with four tents. Approaching from Sarn Ford, the Company may spot smoke from a small campfire.

### 1. THE ELVEN CAMP

If the Company investigates the camp, they are first met by an Elven scout, Brethil, armed with a bow. He stops the Player-heroes, asking about their business in these lands. He is suspicious, but has reasons to befriend the Company — one of his companions is wounded, and needs help.

If the Player-heroes win Brethil's trust, they are led to the camp. There are two more Elves there, Randur, a scholar, and Sulrien, a warrior. Randur is wounded, and clearly in pain — he will gladly accept any help from the Player-heroes, explaining the reason for the Elves' presence in return.

Randur says that they come from the Grey Havens. They arrived the day before, led by Aranwe, their leader — Aranwe is meant to leave Middle-earth soon, but first he wants to



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recover an heirloom that belonged to his household, counted among the founders of the refuge.

When the Elves arrived they entered the wood and headed for the lake, but they were mercilessly tormented by the animals of the forest with no apparent reason: so fierce was the beasts' onslaught and so great their surprise that the Elves decided to split and flee. They were meant to regroup at the camp, but Aranwe has yet to return.

**THE ELVES OF MITHLOND:** The trio of Elves have their own business in Tindailin and it might interfere with that of the Player-heroes — they are on a mission to recover the *Heart of Tindailin*, a large ruby that once belonged to their leader's elder sister — Mirwen. She left the refuge long ago, and she never returned.

Should the Company encounter the Elves after they have visited the woods and while in possession of Mirwen's gem (see page 77), the Elves will do anything to get it back — although Randur hopes to resolve everything with diplomacy and will only use violence as a last resort. Brethil and Sulrien suspect that the Company might simply be looters (especially if they aren't Elves), while Randur is less prone to prejudice.

## *Brethil*

Brethil is the scout of the group and is armed with a bow. He doesn't speak much and observes everything with extreme attention. It is hard for Brethil to trust anyone, so he is suspicious of the Company, but he is willing to change his attitude based on the actions of the Player-heroes.

**OCCUPATION:** Elf scout

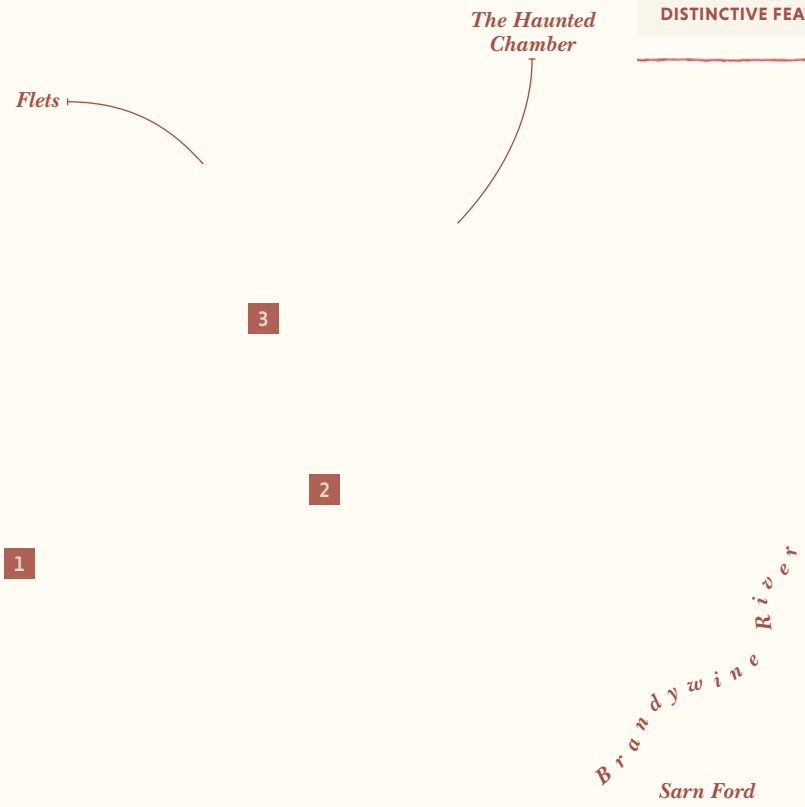
**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Observant, Taciturn

## *Sulrien*

Young and hot-headed, Sulrien prefers action to words. She is bent on her mission, and is eager to go back into the woods to look for Aranwe. She often stands up, slashing the air with her sword, and Randur struggles to keep her calm, especially if Brethil persuades her to believe that the Company might be there to steal the *Heart of Tindailin*.

**OCCUPATION:** Elf warrior

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Impulsive, Ruthless



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### *Randur*

Randur is a scholar, as well as the most ancient Elf in the trio. He is the most interested in understanding what is happening, so he can write it in his report and update the maps that he never stops consulting. He carries a finely carved stick, and sometimes leans on it, as if suffering from some old injury, in addition to his fresh one.

**OCCUPATION:** Elf scholar

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Patient, Wise

### *Aranwe*

Aranwe is Mirwen's brother, and is here to recover their family heirloom. When the Elves were attacked by the animals in the grove, Aranwe was targeted even more violently (Herunen recognised him as Mirwen's kin) and fled in the opposite direction to the others until he arrived near the pond where he was taken captive by the spirit and imprisoned in his lair.

**OCCUPATION:** Elf leader

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Commanding, Loyal

## 2. THE GROVE

At the edge of the wood, not very far from the camp of the Elves, a very uneven path overgrown by vegetation leads into the depths of the grove. The path opens between two rows of trees — once, it must have looked like a majestic corridor flanked by tall pillars; today, huge roots emerge from the ground, and a layer of dead leaves and thick undergrowth give the impression of a forlorn and desolate place.

Among the trees, all sounds seem muffled, but the area is not entirely silent: a continuous rustling can be heard, as if some wild beast is following the Player-heroes as they advance. At night the atmosphere is even more oppressive: a thick darkness covers everything and all sounds become even more indistinct, save for the footsteps of the Company that seem to reverberate dully.

**THE GUARDIANS ATTACK:** Once deep inside the grove, the Company is targeted by the wrath of the guardians of the grove. Wild beasts and plants alike seem to focus their ill-will on the Company, especially Elven Player-heroes, attacking them directly, or making their progress difficult — birds (or bats at night) fly into their faces; spiders, snakes and squirrels climb on their legs; brambles and vines seem to make them stumble on purpose, or 'accidentally' whip them as they try to push their way forward, and so on.

> The guardians do not pose a dangerous threat to the Player-heroes' health, but their behaviour is deeply distressing, as they clearly perceive that they are being targeted by the ill-will of a dark force — all Player-heroes gain 2 Shadow points (Dread); Elves gain 3 Shadow points instead.

**THE FLETS:** Deep into the woods the Company finds what remains of the ancient Elven refuge. There are several flets scattered among the trees — wooden platforms built above ground that the Elves use as living places. Set at different heights on the trees and of different sizes, they are all abandoned, and at different levels of decay.

If the Player-heroes look carefully, among the debris they can find a hidden cavity in a tree trunk, concealing a dark

### THALION'S DIARY

The journal is written in Elvish. It contains many notes, as well as sketches of plants, flowers, and maps. For the most part the journal is illegible, the dampness of the hiding place has blurred the ink, except for a few pages here and there:

*"Today I made Herunen happy: I brought him that bizarre animal skull I found on my last trip in Wilderland, the one that appears to have three small horns... Who knows what its original appearance was, perhaps some kind of goat born with a deformity? Now it has found a new home in a respectable collection!"*

*"My trip to Rivendell turned out to be very useful: in the library I found some very interesting old maps, which I copied to the best of my capabilities. I put my copies safely in the hiding-place in the clearing, for them to be reproduced by a more skilled cartographer."*

The last legible page is written in haste: *"The Enemy is here. We weren't expecting such a terrible host. I am needed. I am sorry Mirwen, I'll come back to you".*



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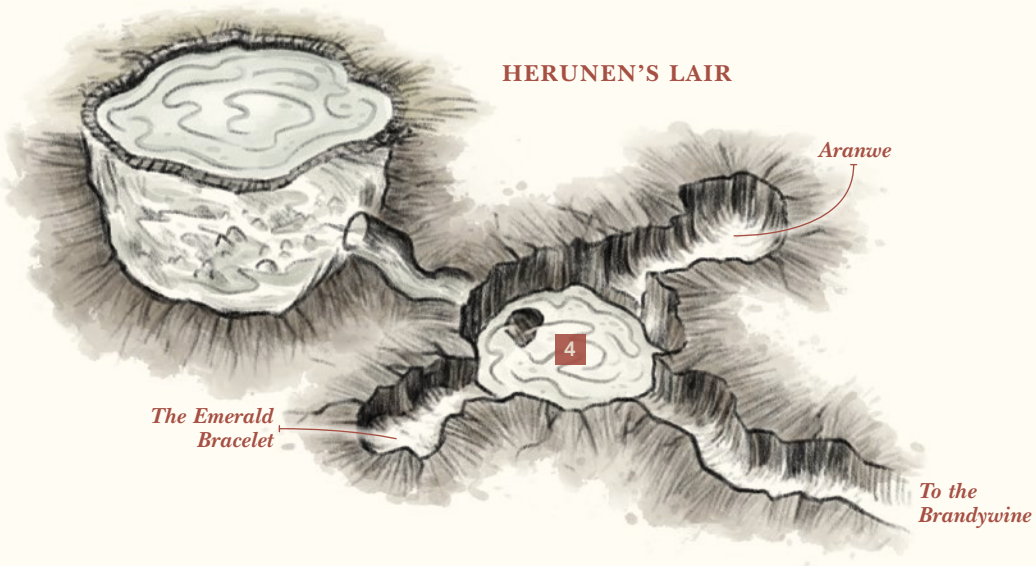


green cloth bag wrapped in a grey cloak. Inside the bag is Thalion's journal (a small volume with a brown leather cover closed by two laces that go around it), as well as a quill, a bottle of dried ink and a small dagger decorated with a family crest.

### 3. THE CLEARING

At the centre of the grove opens a roughly circular clearing, dominated by a small lake. Logs cut at the perfect height to sit on can be found around it, but everything is covered with moss and vines.

A path made of stone tiles decorated with Elven runes leads to the pond. Several tiles are misplaced, and lie scattered about. If interpreted, the runes seem to compose a song dedicated to the Vala Lord of Waters.

Several uprooted trees lie all around the lake, not far from its shores, as if some unknown force felled them, erupting from the pond itself. Buried by the vegetation are the remains of several ancient metal lanterns of Elven make, now completely ruined. Among the debris can be found also a long sword — if the Elves from the Grey Havens are with the Player-heroes, they immediately recognise it as the blade of Aranwe, their leader.

**THE HAUNTED CHAMBER:** Hidden under a large fallen tree, once marked by a circle of stones but now completely hidden by vegetation, is a low, sturdy wooden door, surrounded by large and twisted roots. Once opened, the door leads to a small underground room, immersed in pitch-black darkness. Inside lurks a shadow creature animating the remains of a man who entered Tindailin in search of treasure and who fell victim to Herunen's wrath (a Barrow-wight, see 154 of *The One Ring*). It immediately assaults anyone who dares enter.

If the Barrow-wight is dealt with, the Player-heroes can explore the underground room. It contains crates and barrels of supplies, now spoiled, as well as a small store of adventuring gear such as bows and arrows, knives, maps and a couple of coats of leather armour.

The gem of Mirwen, the *Heart of Tindailin*, is here, inside an oak chest decorated in silver. It's a large ruby, cut in an unusual seven-faceted shape by a jewelsmith from Beleriand.

**THE POND:** The water of the small lake is unnaturally still and clean, but not completely clear, as if the light finds it difficult to penetrate the surface. If the Player-heroes look carefully, they notice a recess about ten feet deep and facing north-east, on the opposite side of the path leading to the clearing. It is the opening to an underwater passage connecting the pond to the Brandywine river — Herunen arrived here through it, long ago, and today the spirit still inhabits it.

### 4. HERUNEN'S LAIR

By diving into the pond and swimming into the tunnel, the Player-heroes can emerge into Herunen's lair… as long as he allows it. The spirit rarely leaves this spot, but if he has, and perceives someone diving into the waters, he returns in a few minutes and immediately confronts the trespassers (see Schemes and Trouble, page 78).

Herunen's lair is a roughly circular cave with a domed roof and a diameter of 5 yards. The water is shallow here, and so it is possible to stand without the need to stay afloat swimming. The chamber is suffused with a constant soft gleam at



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all hours, coming from an aperture on the roof that seems to amplify or soften whatever light is outside.

The cave is bare, save for niches of different sizes opening along the walls. They contain hundreds of exotic objects, a collection that Herunen has accumulated over the centuries: colourful stones and jewels with bizarre shapes from the Misty Mountains, small statues from Harad, glass objects from Wilderland, arrowheads and daggers from Rhun, the skeleton of a fish, a skull that looks like that of a goat with three horns, and much more.

**THE PRISONER:** Four tunnels branch out from the cave, but only two lead out — the one that leads back to the pond and the one leading to the Brandywine river. One short tunnel leads to a smaller cave, where Aranwe, the Elf leader, is found, wounded and confused. Herunen tormented him, as he recognised him as being of the same blood as Mirwen, the betrayer of his friend Thalion, and intends to keep him prisoner until the Elf dies of exhaustion and hunger. To save Aranwe, the Company must bring him back to the surface.

**THE EMERALD BRACELET:** The other tunnel leads to a second chamber, where Herunen keeps an elegant mahogany box carved with motifs of waves and swans that plough the waters. Inside is Thalion's message to Mirwen, and a bracelet made of three thick intertwined silver threads, decorated with emeralds carved in the shape of a leaf. Inside, an engraving in Tengwar reads: "Beyond the sea, to the end of the world".

The bracelet is a piece of exquisite Elven workmanship and is a Marvellous Artefact with a Blessing of AWARENESS.

### A BITTER END?

Regardless of how the Player-heroes handle the situation in Tindailin, the Landmark probably remains a dark and foreboding place, shunned by Elves and mortals alike. But the Player-heroes may have a chance to restore it to its previous status as a peaceful retreat – if they bring Thalion's message and gift to Mirwen, she might resolve to return to Tindailin, and make peace with Herunen. But where did Mirwen go? She can be anywhere the Loremaster wishes, from the Grey Havens to Wilderland, or even across the Sea. Aranwe certainly knows, but his willingness to tell the Player-heroes about it depends on the nature of their relationship.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### *Herunen*

Herunen was once the benevolent keeper of Tindailin, a water spirit whose essence has been corrupted by years of brooding over the betrayal suffered by his friend Thalion. He is filled with anger and bitterness, and vents his rage on any who come close to the refuge, especially Elves. He appears as a slender man with Elven features, but sporting a long beard. He rarely shows himself clearly to visitors, instead trying to get them away from the refuge by any means at his disposal.

By his powers, Herunen can raise the waters of the pond, creating sudden and powerful waves. If any trespasser reaches the pond, he will try to prevent them from diving in. He will also try to capture any Elf, using the water to imprison them in his cave so that he can ask about Mirwen, eager to take revenge on the one who most deserves his hatred.

Herunen can be encountered anywhere within the confines of Tindailin, but can stray as far as the Brandywine river if he must.

**HERUNEN**
Bitter, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 7

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 2 | 7 | +1 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Conjured Waves 3 (7/12)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Drown.* Spend 1 Resolve to make one Player-hero suffer a severe Endurance loss from suffocation.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Spirit.* Spend 1 Resolve to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding any magical weapon.



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# The Queen's Hall

*Kings of little kingdoms fought together, and the young Sun shone like fire on the red metal of their new and greedy swords.*

### RUMOUR

*"Haven't you heard? There's a queen in Lond Daer, now! Some say she came in a golden ship from the West, and others say that she slew a Dragon — a Dragon, mind you — and took her golden crown from his hoard, and gave all the rest of the treasure to her knights. She's got knights too, you know, brave warriors all in shining armour, out riding on the Road a-questing and thwarting evils, I hear. She's called for heroes to come to her hall, and soon she'll put all the world to rights. And oh — her hall's all made of silver, too, and she drinks from a cup of gold."*

### OLD LORE

*Old Lore is of little use here; the castle is of recent origin. Research can, of course, reveal the history of Lond Daer, from its origins as a Númenórean haven, to its decline into a town of crazed astrologers, to its eventual abandonment.*

## Background

Arnor remembers there was once a king. The memory may have "faded into the grass", as they say in Bree, but what has faded can be renewed. Grass may grow over the old stones at Deadmen's Dike, but that is still Norbury of the Kings; that is still the King's Road that runs through the land.

In Lond Daer, there is a king again — or rather, a queen. Hers is a little kingdom, and a little hall. The Queen of Lond Daer's dominion is the tiniest fragment of the once-sprawling kingdom of the north founded by Elendil the Tall; her subjects are so few that all together, their number barely matches the population of any of a dozen minor towns and villages that once existed in Arnor. Arnor is gone, the Kings from the Sea are gone — but the Queen of Lond Daer lives, and in her the people find renewed hope. Ask anyone from the Isen to the Brandywine, and they'll have heard tales of the new kingdom by the shore.

Travellers who harken to those tales, though, may be somewhat disappointed when they first see the hall. The Queen's Hall is not a great stone fortress, as the kings of old raised in Fornost Erain or Annúminas; it is not even like the golden-roofed mead hall of Meduseld in Rohan. A traveller from the great cities of Dale or Minas Tirith might scoff at the hall, dismissing it as little more than an overgrown cow-shed. Its walls are made of stone, but the roof is made of cut turf over ribs of whalebone.

Inside, the hall is firelit, a great dancing bonfire in the hearth. Long trestle tables run along the hall, with stools and chairs for the Queen's Knights. Again, these warriors are far from the heroes in the tales — they have no shining armour, nor Dwarf-forged swords, nor are they Elven-fair. They are rough men, dressed in furs and skins, and their weapons are

### JOURNEY EVENTS

Follow the River to the Sea, and you will find Lond Daer, where the Queen's Hall stands (see page 80). Queen Nimue makes no attempt to hide her stronghold; on the contrary, she welcomes travellers and visitors from afar. Thus, the journey is likely to be as safe and uneventful as any trek through the wilds of Minhiriath can be.

- **THE WANDERING KNIGHT:** The company encounters a knight of Lond Daer, Dame Eshil, one of a number of warriors dispatched by the queen to watch the roads of the new kingdom. Dame Eshil tells exaggerated, fanciful tales of the glory of the Queen's Hall; she's armed with a new-forged sword, and is eager to wield it in the service of Lond Daer, but so far Dame Eshil's most perilous quests have been hunting down lost sheep or directing travellers toward the city.
- **THE BEGGAR:** A wandering beggar claims to be a sailor from the far south; he says he was knocked overboard in a storm, and by strange good fortune avoided drowning and was washed up on shore. Penniless and alone, he begs for alms. However, if questioned, he's evasive about his name, his origins or the ship he travelled on. (The man was one of the crew of the Black Númenórean vessel *Kathuphazgân* — see page 34).



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crudely made for the most part. They look hardly different from the barbaric Fisher-folk of the coast, or any grim-faced brigand who might be encountered in the wilds of Eriador. If there is a difference, though, it is in the eyes — there is a light of hope there, as if they are all enchanted. When they look at this rough hall, they do not see the smoke and soot, they do not see the humble fare on the battered tables, the low roof or the draughty walls. No, they see the hall as it is in the tales — a place of honour and glory, a house for heroes!

## LOCATIONS

The Queen's Hall is to be found in the town of Lond Daer, at the mouth of the Greyflood River. It stands on a mound overlooking the town, a proud sentinel guarding both the harbour and the town's low earthen ramparts.

The hall was built on the site of an ancient Númenórean villa, and incorporates the remains of that earlier structure into its shape.

### 1. OUTER MOUND

The Hall is protected by an outer ditch and a mound of earth topped with jagged stones and sharp shells. In times of attack by Fisher-folk or Dunlendings, the entire population of Lond Daer can withdraw inside the area girded by the mound and take refuge in the Hall.

### 2. OUTBUILDINGS

Here can be found fodder and other supplies for the horses, as well as animal pens and storehouses. A few of the queen's servants live here, but it's easy for a clever intruder to hide in this maze of outbuildings.

### 3. STABLES

Here are kept riding horses and ponies. There's no tradition of war-horses in this part of Middle-earth — even the greatest of the Knights of Lond Daer fights on foot. Wild horses of considerable size and strength do roam on the plains of Enedwaith, the descendants of the horses brought east from Númenor, but few here have the talent to train them.

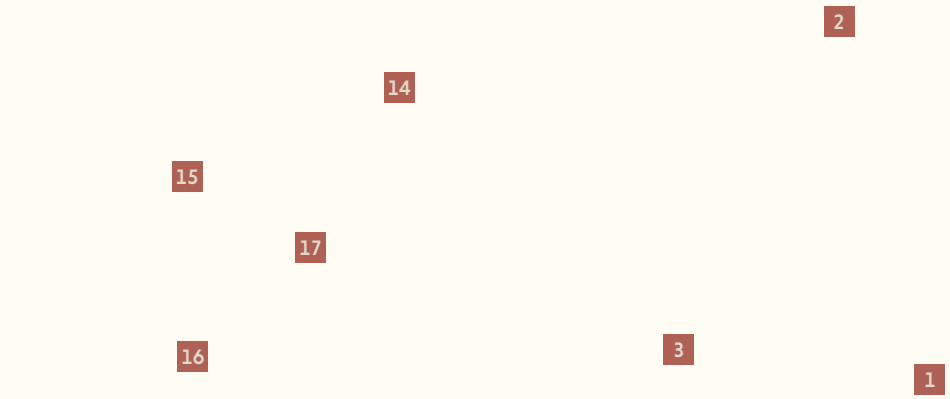
### 4. MAIN DOOR

The doors of the Queen's Hall are of wood taken from Eryn Vorn. They are decorated with the bones of the sea-serpent she slew, arranged in beautiful spiral patterns. Hurin Doorward, the doorwarden of the hall, has his post here; those seeking to enter the hall must leave their weapons in his care.

### 5. OUTER HALL

A smaller outer chamber. Two ancient statues, salvaged from ruins in Tyrn Gorthad by adventuring knights, stand watch. The statues are surprisingly intact, and depict one-handed

THE QUEENS HALL



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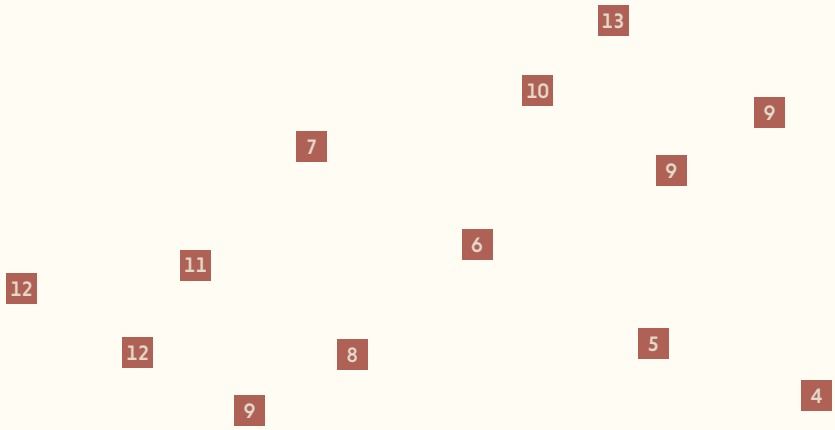
## INTERIOR




Beren and Lúthien Tinúviel; Beren seems to be cloaked in the skin of a wolf, and Lúthien the wings of a great bat. The people of Lond Daer have no knowledge of sculpting, but they have tried to alter the features of the latter statue to better resemble the queen's face.

### 6. INNER HALL

The great hall of Lond Daer. This long room serves as feast-hall and mead-hall, court and council. Long tables run the length of the room where folk may gather; there are sleeping places, too, for guests. A great leaping fire burns in the middle of the hall. The floor is covered with rushes, but in places the original mosaic floor can be seen, dating back to the Númenórean villa that once stood on this mound; more of the mosaic can be seen in the adjoining council room (see entry 10).

There's no inn or tavern in Lond Daer, so by night most of the townsfolk gather here under the queen's roof. By custom, brawls and other rude behaviour are taken out to the garden, but as the night wears on, anything goes in the shadowed corners of the hall.

### 7. DAIS

This raised dais is where the queen sits; honoured knights may be invited to join her at her table. Above the dais, hanging from thick chains, is the skull of the sea-serpent, a grisly totem in place of a crown.

### 8. KITCHEN

Expect fish, as the queen and her knights favour it over meat and venison, although the queen may command a pig or calf to be slaughtered for honoured heroes.

### 9. STOREROOMS

Needful things; blankets and furs, bundles of rushes, food, tools, furniture, clothing, even a few rare bottles of wine imported all the way from Bree.

### 10. COUNCIL ROOM

On those rare occasions when Queen Nimue must take formal counsel from her knights, they gather here in this chamber. The floor of the council room is a magnificent ancient mosaic, preserved by good fortune beneath a stone slab; it depicts a great ship bearing a white tree instead of a mast, surrounded by seven stars and seven stones. Some of the star-tiles are made of a curious crystal, and sometimes glow with their own magical light; no doubt the maker of the mosaic knew what these lights portended, but that secret has been lost.

### 11. PRIVATE CHAMBERS

The queen's chambers. A hidden compartment in one wall holds the treasury of Lond Daer — a few jewels and coins of small worth, no more than a Lesser Hoard. The house of Johan Fleet (see page 83) holds much more treasure.



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### 12. GUEST CHAMBERS

This room is reserved for the use of strangers who wish to withdraw from the clamour of the hall — or for those who warrant observation. A spy-hole in one wall allows the queen or her servants to eavesdrop on visitors.

### 13. ARMOURY

Spears, bows, wooden shields — enough to outfit a host of warriors. In addition, there are a few swords taken from barrows or ruins in the north, which may be awarded to the valorous and the deserving.

### 14. BATHHOUSE

The original Númenórean villa had an elaborate system of pipes and furnaces for the distribution of hot water, but all that cunning work fell victim to time. Still, the bathhouse has been restored and now servants can heat kettles of hot water to fill the bath for honoured guests.

### 15. GARDEN

This garden slopes down the seaward side of the mound. Vegetables and herbs grow here — when they're not trampled by rowdy guests from the ale-hall.

### 16. CRYPT

This ancient crypt dates back to the time of the villa; it was buried beneath the shifting earth, and rediscovered when the hall was raised on the hilltop once more. The place is said, of course, to be haunted. It's also used, on rare occasions, as a dungeon for prisoners.

### 17. WATCHTOWER

A wooden watchtower. A bell atop the tower can be rung to signal the alarm. From the top of the tower, it's said a keen eye can see the open ocean at the end of the firth.

## ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

### *Queen Nimue*

Young Queen Nimue rules Lond Daer by acclamation — ten years ago, by a stroke of fortune, she saved the town from a sea-serpent, and the grateful townsfolk crowned her queen. Before that, the town was ruled by a council of elders and grey-hairs, and while they are jealous of Nimue's new rank, they know that she is much more popular than they, and so they bow and smile while each one in turn whispers in Nimue's ear that they are the only one she can trust.

For her part, Nimue feels that she has a high destiny, that she was chosen by fate to protect Lond Daer. Her courage and conviction has inspired the warriors of the town to become knights in her service, each one competing with the rest to win glory in the queen's name (to the greybeards, it is like a spreading contagion of madness, but they can do nothing to slow this exuberance of destiny).

Before she was a queen, Nimue gathered shellfish and driftwood on the shore; she never learned to read, and came to the throne knowing little of history or the wider world. She now studies avidly, believing that a queen should be wise and learned as well as brave. She never doubts that she was chosen to lead, but sometimes, in the night, she fears that she will fall short of this high purpose and bring Lond Daer to ruin.

**OCCUPATION:** Regent

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Bold, Charismatic

### GANDALF THE GREY

The Grey Wizard is an infrequent visitor to Lond Daer. He first arrived soon after the sea-serpent began to trouble the town, and there were whispers that he was somehow responsible for the monster's presence. This ill reputation was only enhanced when the Wizard entered the Towers of the Stargazers (see page 23); thunder rolled deep underground, and foul vapours poured from cracks in the rocks on the north shore of the firth. The Wizard did nothing about the serpent (although some folk in town claim to have seen the old man talking to young Nimue), and did not return for several months, in which time the serpent was slain and the queen crowned.

Gandalf has become the unofficial court Wizard at Lond Daer, giving sage advice and performing the occasional act of conjuring. Most notably, when a storm threatened to destroy the fishing fleet, he arrived just in time to quell the winds and light a fiery beacon on the watchtower to guide the ships back into the safety of the firth. He sometimes brings books for Queen Nimue, and has been known to put knights on the road to complete quests and heroic deeds.



cj kong (Order: 36612205)

## Johan Fleet

The richest man in Lond Daer; his father fled the wreck of Tharbad, bringing the treasury of that town with him down the Greyflood. Fleet expected to become head of the ruling council, but he was usurped — as he sees it — by the queen. For now, he grits his teeth behind his smile, and claims to be Queen Nimue's most loyal servant, lavishing gifts on her and supporting her decisions, while secretly planning to undermine and replace her. Fleet could put up with having a queen — she's certainly a useful way to rally the strength of Lond Daer against potential enemies — if only she were a tractable one who would listen without question to his wise advice.

By profession, Fleet is a merchant; he trades with the Dwarves of Harmelt (page 24) and other settlements in Ered Luin, and even as far inland as Bree. He sees himself as cultured and sophisticated, a man of the world, and believes that Lond Daer can be made into a great trading port once more. He has heard tell of the wealth of the southlands, of Gondor and Umbar, and how there are many in those parts who crave land of their own; well, there is land enough for many realms between Isen and Greyflood, and Johan Fleet intends to be master of them all by bringing settlers north, and selling them the tools and weapons they need to carve out new homes in the wild.

**OCCUPATION:** Merchant

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Cunning, Devious

### THE KNIGHTS OF LOND DAER

*…a company of knights in full harness riding grey horses…*

Put all thoughts of the Knights of Dol Amroth or the black-clad guard of the Citadel from your mind — the Knights of Lond Daer are nothing like such folk. In garb and manner they are like the rest of the grim folk of this desolate land, clad in hides or furs or coarse cloth; they have no harness or polished lances, just old swords and battered wooden shields. They are knights only in spirit, in fancy; they call themselves knights to evoke figures out of stories and legends from the days of the kings.

But, in doing so, they become knights in deed, for their courage is equal to the bravest knight in Gondor or the Mark.

Player-heroes who catch the eye of Queen Nimue, for example by performing some extraordinary deed for her or her community, may be asked to join the ranks of the Knights of Lond Daer (a number of suitable 'heroic deeds' are listed under *Schemes and Trouble*, on page 84). A Company counting one or more Knights of Lond Daer among its members can choose the Queen's Hall as a safe haven.

## Haldane

Haldane looks more like a Beorning than one of the smaller folk of the coast; a giant of a man, his head brushes against the low whale-bones of the roof in the Queen's Hall. He was bodyguard and servant to Johan Fleet, and has a reputation as a brutish enforcer. In the last ten years, he has instead become Queen Nimue's most ardent follower, and is counted among the best of her warriors. Anyone who questions Queen Nimue or says a bad word against her meets Haldane's massive fist.

While Haldane professes to be devoted to the queen, dark tales continue to circle around him (often passed on by Hurin Doorward). He may be a Knight of Lond Daer, but he remains cruel, and shows no mercy to fallen foes. He may be loyal to the queen, but he is jealous if she shows favour to any other knights. It's also whispered that he's fallen back under the influence of Johan Fleet — or that he never left.

Of course, all those tales may be nothing more than scurrilous whispers, spread by those wishing to undermine the queen's right hand.

**OCCUPATION:** Warrior, Knight of Lond Daer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Cruel, Steadfast

## Hurin Doorward

Old Hurin Doorward lost his foot in an accident at sea; Queen Nimue gave him a place of honour guarding her door. From his stool on the porch, Hurin watches everything that happens in Lond Daer, and he's a notorious gossip, delighting in mischief and telling shaggy dog tales about haunted barrows and giant monsters. He has a knack, too, for winning the trust of others, convincing them that they're the only person Hurin's ever confided in.

Hurin and Haldane have long disliked one another; the root of their rivalry predates the time of Queen Nimue.

**OCCUPATION:** Door Warden, Knight of Lond Daer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Busybody, Old



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## *Enfys the Fisher*

Enfys is one of the Fisher-folk from the shoreland close to the mouth of the Isen. She quarrelled with her kinsfolk and was exiled into the wilderness, where she wandered for several years before finding a new home in Lond Daer. Queen Nimue took pity on her and gave her shelter; in return, Enfys swore eternal loyalty to the town. She's a talented hunter and swimmer, and has proven herself to be a brave knight of Lond Daer. That said — the tribe she hails from is shunned even by the other Fisher-folk, for they are said to worship dark powers in the ocean depths. Enfys has abjured most of their ways — but it's said of her that she still makes offerings to the deep in the night before a battle.

**OCCUPATION:** Hunter, Knight of Lond Daer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Brave, Secretive

## *Falmir Fairbairns*

The Fairbairns family dwells in the west of the Shire, "within a nose of the sea" as they say, so perhaps Falmir was always doomed to wanderlust. However, it was not until he was well into his tweens that he had a singular series of misfortunes that resulted in him falling into the river at Sarn Ford and being swept away downstream. The other Hobbits in his company believed him 'drownded', and brought the sad news of his demise back to the Shire. In truth, young Fairbairns washed up on the southern shore of the river some miles away. For a full accounting of his travels you would need to ask him (or the Doorward); suffice it to say he fell in with bad company (one Gandalf the Grey) and ended up going south instead of back to the Shire, picked up some trinkets (including a singular knife forged by a Dwarf-smith named Skayes) and ended up in the service of Lond Daer. Falmir intends to return to the Shire one day, but now that he's seen how dark and dangerous the world is outside the four Farthings, he's determined to help make the land a little safer and kinder before going home.

**OCCUPATION:** Hobbit Knight of Lond Daer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Adventurous, Reckless

## *Alis the Singer*

Beautiful and cunning, Alis is a newcomer to the court; she is a singer from the southlands, who claims to have travelled north in search of new tales and songs. She has already begun to compose heroic lays based on the deeds of other knights of Lond Daer, and the knights now compete to be the next to have their stories immortalised in song.

Alis may be a spy for some enemy of Lond Daer — for Johan Fleet, for the Black Númenóreans — or she may simply be bored and cynical, maliciously eager to undermine Lond Daer's dreams of heroism by showing that all the songs are hollow, self-serving lies.

**OCCUPATION:** Singer, Knight of Lond Daer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Cunning, Fair

# Schemes and Trouble

### THE GREEN KNIGHT

Lond Daer has been attacked in the past by the Tree-folk of the dark Eryn Vorn. Now, instead of a host of whooping, mud-smeared raiders, there comes a single warrior out of the greenwood. This Green Knight is a giant of a man, taller even than mighty Haldane, and he challenges the best warrior in the Hall to a contest, blow for blow.

This Green Knight has the benefit of a draught from Eryn Vorn's Tree of Sorrow, and can endure even a grievous wound. Who has the courage to stand against the Green Knight?

### THE QUEST OF THE DROWNED

One of the fishing boats of Lond Daer is lost in a storm — it was blown south by cold winds out of Forochel, and was likely wrecked on the shores near the mouth of the Isen. Enfys volunteers to lead a band of knights south along the coast to rescue the survivors — before her kinfolk capture them!

### THE QUEST OF THE SCEPTRE

Alis sings a story of the Kings of Arnor and their battles against Angmar; she speaks of the fabled Sceptre of Annúminas, the ancient symbol of rulership over the north. Why, that sceptre must be buried in old Fornost Erain, in the lands beyond Bree! Would it not be a worthy quest for knights of this new realm to find the chief treasure of the kings of old?



cj kong (Order: 36612205)

# The Fields of Slaughter

*"…for there was sorrow then too, and gathering dark,*
*but great valour, and great deeds that were not wholly vain."*

### RUMOUR

*"Centuries ago, a terrible battle was fought on the plains west of Deadmen's Dike. They say it was a great victory for the King, but one that came at grievous cost. The battlefield is haunted to this day, as the land itself cannot forget such terrible sorrow. In recent times, a woman has been seen wandering the plains alone, as one who has lost her way. Some say it's a spirit, others think she's an Elf, a princess maybe."*

### OLD LORE

*"Before the city of Fornost Erain fell, and the kingdom of Arnor was destroyed, the last king of the North sent messengers south with a desperate plea for assistance. Eärnur, prince of Gondor, answered the call, and a great army landed at the Elven havens. They arrived too late to save Arnor, but they met the Witch-king of Angmar on the plains west of Fornost and defeated him."*

## THE BATTLE OF FORNOST

A recounting of the events that occurred during the Battle of Fornost is presented here, with references to the involvement of Nalien and Drameth. Player-heroes researching the battle in Rivendell or the Grey Havens may obtain such details as presented below.

**DAYBREAK:** A host of Men from Gondor and Elves from Lindon, including Nalien, descends from the Hills of Evendim and advances in the direction of Fornost Erain. The Witch-king, forewarned of the alliance's approach, chooses to counterattack rather than wait. He unleashes the first wave of his forces, Hillmen of Rhudaur who are not deterred by fighting under the light of the sun.

**MORNING:** The first clash occurs at the westernmost edge of the plain (the Western Plain), with the fury of the Hillmen stopped by the martial discipline of their opposition. Recognising the need for reinforcements and taking advantage of a sky obscured by clouds, the Witch-king whips his great armies of Orcs forward into battle.

The advance of Orc reinforcements is slowed by volleys of arrows, loosed by ranks of bowmen including a small unit of Hobbit archers, positioned on a hill north of the Brandywine river and overlooking the main field (The Blossom Mound). When the Orcs join the fray, the Hillmen are already retreating, leaving more than half their number on the ground as they flee the battlefield.

**LATE MORNING:** Clouds scattered by a wind from the West, the sky clears and the sun appears, sapping the strength of the Orcs of Angmar. The valour of the assembled Host of the West proves too much for them, and many start to flee. A thick mist rises suddenly, maybe conjured by the Witch-king, covering the Orcs' retreat and giving the forces of Angmar a chance to regroup.

**MIDDAY:** A great host of horsemen falls on the retreating Orcs. They descend from the north, having passed round the Hills of Evendim to catch the enemy by surprise (The Northern Slope). The host is composed of Elves of Lindon, including Drameth, as well as tall riders of Wilderland, staunch allies of Gondor. The orderly retreat of the troops of Angmar turns into a rout, and the Witch-king flees north with all the troops he can rally, heading for his fortress at Carn Dûm. The cavalry of the alliance engage in pursuit, led by Prince Eärnur of Gondor.

**AFTERNOON:** The bodyguard of the Witch-king, a company of chosen warriors of Angmar, stops to delay the pursuers (at The Sheltered Fields). Fierce and empowered by sorcerous means, the riders kill many among the Elves and Men of Gondor, before they are themselves killed. Drameth is among the fallen.

**LATE AFTERNOON:** Despite the sacrifice of his bodyguard, the army of the Witch-king is finally overtaken by his pursuers when another host coming from Rivendell intercepts it. The army of Angmar is defeated, its forces so utterly annihilated that "not a Man nor an Orc of that realm remained west of the Mountains".

Before the battle is over, the Witch-king singles out Eärnur of Gondor in the fighting, but the prince's steed carries him away from the Nazgûl's terrifying presence. Glorfindel, the leader of the host of Rivendell, confronts the Witch-king and banishes the wraith from the north. The Elf-lord discourages Eärnur from pursuing the Witch-king, prophesying "Not by the hand of man will he fall."



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## Background

The Battle of Fornost was fought on the plains east of Lake Evendim almost a thousand years ago. The armies of the Witch-king were vanquished by a coalition of Elves and Men, and the Lord of Morgul himself was forced to flee. Great deeds were committed that day, and the power of Angmar was broken once and for all, but such was the suffering and grief that marred the occasion that it still stains the Fields of Slaughter to this day. Some say that the cries of the fallen can still be heard on the plains, carried by the wind, and stories tell of the terrible fate that befell those who were cut down by the Witch-king himself.

No one knows this better than those immortal Elves who took part in the conflict — Nalien of Lindon is one such survivor. She fought in the vanguard that first met the enemy on the field, and she witnessed the worst of the fighting. Her dearest friend Drameth, daughter of Darwen, died in the battle, and the pain of her demise left a permanent scar on Nalien's soul.

Although often tempted to leave Middle-earth and sail west to the Undying Lands, Nalien never did, enduring her sorrow for many long centuries. But things have taken a turn for the worse for her recently — she started to be tormented by dreams of Drameth's ghost, and she finally resolved to journey to the Fields of Slaughter, to confront the spectre of Drameth herself.

## Locations

A Company encountering Nalien on the Fields of Slaughter may join the Elf in her search for the spirit of Drameth. To succeed, they must listen to Nalien's recollections of the battle, possibly comparing them with what they know of the event, and the current appearance of the site a thousand years later.

### 1. The Western Plain

If the Company approaches from the west, the first part of the landmark they visit will be the site of the battle's earliest engagement, the Western Plain. This flat area marks the end of a long, gentle slope stretching down from the Hills of Evendim. To the south, a rise of small mounds and the loops of the Brandywine River narrow the approach to Fornost.

The Player-heroes realise they have entered a blighted place when they notice that the tell-tale signs of small mammals and birds one would expect to see in such wildlands are strangely absent. Before long, they catch sight of an Elven wanderer on the plain below….

When the Company approaches the field's solitary wanderer, they may be relieved to discover it's not a spirit, but a living being — an Elf from Lindon by the name of Nalien. She is clearly distressed and disoriented, her face is scarred and her hair has turned an unnatural grey, the possible consequence of some harrowing encounter.

### *Nalien of Lindon*

**When the Player-heroes meet her, Nalien is constantly mumbling to herself, in an uninterrupted narration that mixes present events with old ones in a confused jumble. She is not dangerous, but if the Company is not careful, she might confuse them with ghosts from her past and accidentally injure them.**

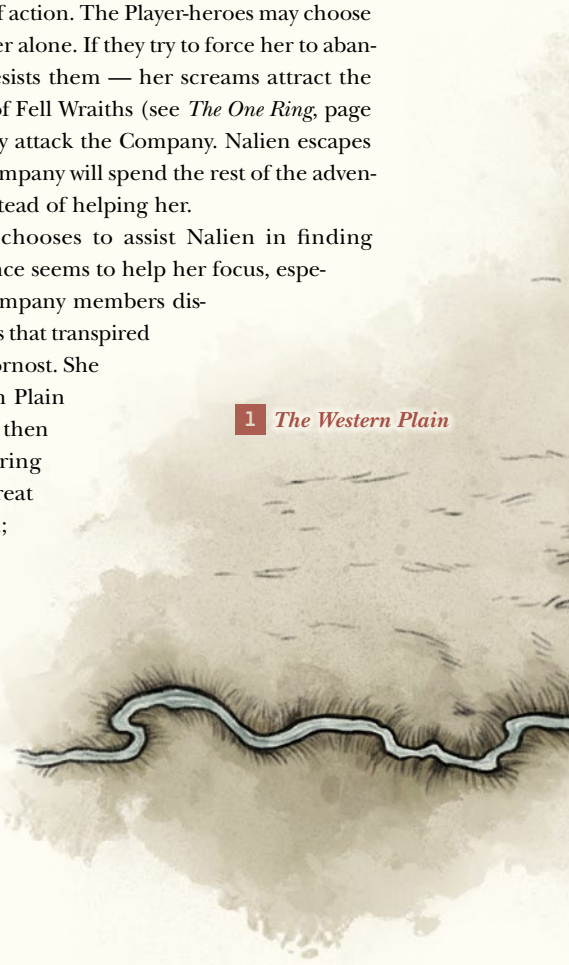
**Nalien is clearly struggling to comprehend the Player-heroes, and to make herself understood, but with mutual persistence she can explain why she is here. She is certain that the spirit of her dear friend, Drameth, failed to pass into the afterlife when she was killed during the Battle of Fornost, a thousand years ago. She has become 'unhoused', Nalien says, and her shade haunts the battlefield.**

**OCCUPATION:** Warrior and healer

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Wilful, Forgetful

Nalien is determined to seek out Drameth's ghost, and find a way to help her to move on. She cannot be convinced to abandon this course of action. The Player-heroes may choose to help her, or leave her alone. If they try to force her to abandon her quest, she resists them — her screams attract the attention of a group of Fell Wraiths (see *The One Ring*, page 155), who immediately attack the Company. Nalien escapes in the chaos — the Company will spend the rest of the adventure pursuing her, instead of helping her.

If the Company chooses to assist Nalien in finding Drameth, their presence seems to help her focus, especially if any of the Company members discuss with her the events that transpired during the Battle of Fornost. She lingers in the Western Plain for only a little longer, then she remembers entering the field as part of a great host of Elves and Men; the reassuring presence of Eärnur, a



prince destined to be king of the Dúnedain; and the relentless attacks of Orcs and Hillmen.

Eventually, she breaks from her reverie, and recalls that Drameth was not part of the infantry vanguard, and did not fight on this site. Her spirit won't be found here.

### 2. THE BLOSSOM MOUND

Going east towards Fornost, the Company spots a lonely hilltop overlooking the southern side of the Western Plain. The mound immediately stands out, because it is covered in flowers, where most of the battlefield is covered by little but grass. Player-heroes near the hill can hear the faint trickle of a small stream, running from the main course of the Brandywine River.

With a faint smile, Nalien recalls that this hill is where a small formation of Halfling archers made their contribution to the battle, loyal subjects of the King of Arnor, even after his death. The Hobbits' accurate volleys helped slow the advance of the Witch-king's Orc armies, and many among them fell, hit by the black-feathered arrows that the Orcs shot in return. When the battle was finished, the survivors planted flowers on the site, to commemorate their fallen comrades.

#### THE FLOWERS OF REMEMBRANCE

Hobbit Player-heroes who take a moment to ascend the mound and contemplate their culture's small but profound contribution to the fight against the Shadow may immediately remove 1 point of Shadow.

*The Sheltered Fields*
4

3 *The Northern Slope*

*The Blossom Mound*
2

*The Ruins of Fornost*

THE FIELDS OF SLAUGHTER



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### 3. THE NORTHERN SLOPE

By going north from the Blossom Mound, the Company finds that the land rises gently for a few miles, before starting to fall again. In a moment of lucidity, Nalien recalls that Drameth did not arrive here with the main alliance forces, because she was part of the wing of cavalry which fell upon Angmar's retreating forces descending here from the north.

She remembers catching sight of Drameth briefly as she charged on her horse alongside Prince Ëarnur of Gondor, her spear shining in the gloom with a gleam of chill flame. She recalls how the sight rejuvenated her spirit after a day of harrowing violence. The last she saw of Ëarnur and Drameth was them turning north in pursuit of the fleeing Witch-king. Nalien's recollection ends with tragic silence. Her regret that she could not be with Drameth in her final moments is plain.

It is clear now the Company must journey north to complete their quest.

### 4. THE SHELTERED FIELDS

A miserable hike through grey, windy country awaits the Company as they march along the route taken long ago by those who pursued the Witch-king in his flight. It's a northeasterly trek, bringing the Company ever closer to the foothills of the North Downs. It is not clear how Nalien can discern the path to follow, but she never seems to hesitate.

When the Company has travelled for about thirty miles, they reach a spot close to the eaves of a wood bordering the North Downs. The cry of the wind gives way to absolute silence, hanging like a cloud over a pool of still, shallow water. Though Nalien was never here before, she suddenly knows that it is on this precise spot that the bodyguard of the Witch-king stopped to face their pursuers, to allow their leader to continue in his flight. Standing as if paralysed, Nalien tells the Player-heroes the story of how a hand-picked company of cruel, black-clad riders of Angmar faced the host of Elves and Men of Gondor, and died killing many. Among those who fell under their blows was Drameth.

Within a few moments of the Company's arrival, a host of Fell Wraiths (one for each Player-hero, see *The One Ring*, page 155) emerges from the gloom and attacks. They are the malevolent shades of those Men who were killed by the sorcerous blades of the bodyguard of the Witch-king. Not far from them appears also the spectre of Drameth, an Elf armed and armoured — a thousand years of torment as a houseless spirit has eroded her mind, and she joins the wraiths in their attack on the Company and Nalien.

**DRAMETH THE HOUSELESS**
Swift, Tormented

**ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 6

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 2 | 6 | +2 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Great Spear 3 (5/16, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Deathless.* Spend 1 Resolve to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, spend 1 Resolve to bring the creature back to full Endurance instead. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a magical weapon enchanted with spells for the Bane of the Undead.

*Dreadful Wrath*. On a successful attack roll, the targeted Player-hero gains 1 Shadow point (Dread), +1 Shadow point for each Success icon (ᘐ) on the attack roll. Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Snake-like Speed*. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Resolve to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

#### PEACE FOR DRAMETH

Drameth can be banished to the Halls of Mandos by destroying her ghostly form, but she can also be persuaded to depart Middle-earth of her own volition. Throughout the combat, Nalien plays no part in the fighting, fruitlessly attempting to soothe Drameth's rage. If a Player-hero joins with this attempted reconciliation, encouraging Drameth to listen to her friend, she might have a better chance. This can be resolved as a council, taking place side-by-side with the Combat scene. Convincing Drameth to move on is a bold request (Resistance 6), and contributing to the council with a roll counts as a Player-hero's main action in combat. One way or another, the thwarted Fell Wraiths retreat once Drameth's spirit dissipates.



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## Schemes and Trouble

### The Despair of Nalien

Nalien's history with the Fields of Slaughter, and her connection with the houseless Drameth, are precious assets to help the Company understand what happened. Unfortunately, Nalien is in no condition to share her knowledge easily. She is tired, confused, haunted by ghosts of her past, and interpreting disturbing dreams sent to her by Drameth's spirit.

> Nonetheless, Player-heroes can tease relevant details out of Nalien as they wander the Fields of Slaughter. ENHEARTEN, INSIGHT, and HEALING rolls are most appropriate in these circumstances. If the Player-heroes are successful, Nalien may recount a memory of their current location from the battle, or explain how it relates to Drameth's fate.

If the Player-heroes persistently fail in their interactions with Nalien, their time spent on the Fields of Slaughter could become dangerous. Nalien's fragile condition may cause her to distrust the Company, and attempt to escape or harm them. Her aimless rambles may lead the Company into an ambush. Getting the most out of their association with Nalien depends on the Company both learning to trust her memories and insights, and recognising she needs the direction of kind-hearted caregivers to prevent her from hurting herself or others.

### The Unquiet Dead

Some acts of violence are so excessive they leave a permanent scar upon the landscape where they are enacted. The Fields of Slaughter have become blighted in this way.

> Player-heroes sleeping while in the area wake up remembering the clash of blades and dying screams, and gain 2 points of Shadow (Dread).

Those who fail their Shadow test remember vivid visions of the Battle of Fornost, experienced as warriors in the thick of the fight. This may provide useful insights, as the Player-heroes may witness Nalien or Drameth in action.

### *Hill-trolls*

The Northern Slope concealed the approach of the alliance's cavalry one thousand years ago. Now it hides the home of a family of Hill-trolls (one for every two Player-heroes). These loathsome creatures struggle to find much meat to eat these days, but they linger upon the battlefield regardless, attracted by a dark force they barely understand. The arrival of a lost Elf warrior, with a Company of Player-heroes just behind her, is too tempting a meal for them to ignore.

The Hill-trolls prefer to target unguarded prey, and will attack at night, when the Company rests.

**HILL-TROLL STALKER**
Hungry, Wary

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 60 | 2 | 8 | +2 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Hammer 3 (7/16, Break Shield), Crush 2 (6/12, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Dull-witted.* Player-heroes can attempt a special combat task against Trolls while in Forward stance. The acting player makes a RIDDLE roll as the main action for the round: on a success, the Troll loses 1 point of Hate, plus 1 point for each Success icon (ᘐ) rolled.

*Hideous Toughness*. When an attack inflicts damage to a Troll that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Horrible Strength*. If a Hill-troll Stalker scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured.*



ej kong (Order : 36612205)

# Weathertop

*But long before, in the first days of the North Kingdom,*
*they built a great watch-tower on Weathertop, Amon Sûl they called it.*

### RUMOUR

*"Four or five days east of Bree, you'll come to a line of hills. The southernmost one, closest to the Road, is called Weathertop. It's the tallest of the Weather Hills, and from its summit a traveller — or a bandit — might see for miles out across the land, and spy on comings and goings along the road. Rogues and Rangers use it as a look-out post, and so did other folk in days of old. You'll see ruins there, tumbled walls and dikes, for back in the days of the king there was a great watch-tower there, it's said, where he kept all his jewels. Nothing there now, of course. No jewels, only ruins — and haunted ones too, it's said. There's nothing up there worth taking."*

*"But you'll mark it on the Road, all the same. A great hill with a broken tower, and you'll feel like someone's watching you. If you're lucky, it'll be nothing more than a ghost."*

### OLD LORE

*"When Elendil the Tall came out of the Sea, he built the watch-tower of Amon Sûl near to the heart of his new kingdom. From this tower, a sentry could see a very great distance, and the king could see further still — it is said that from the summit of Amon Sûl, Elendil could see the fastness of Isengard, or the sunlight glittering on far Mount Mindolluin. It was here at this fortress that Elendil awaited the coming of Gil-galad in the War of the Last Alliance."*

*"In later years, when the North Kingdom was divided, possession of the Weather Hills and the fortress of Weathertop was disputed between the kings of Cardolan and Rhudaur. Many wars were fought between those two lands for control of Amon Sûl, and the land around the Weather Hills was dotted with forts and secret paths and hides where sentries could watch for enemies."*

*"All that availed them little in the end; a host came out of Angmar, and laid siege to the hills. Amon Sûl was razed and its tower thrown down, although its chief treasures are said to have been taken back to the king's hall in Fornost. Now, Weathertop is but a ruin, abandoned to the birds and beasts."*

## Background

Long ago, Weathertop was the resting place of one of the palantíri, the fabled Seeing Stones that Elendil brought out of Númenor. The palantír of Amon Sûl was the chief stone of Arnor, able to command the stone at the palace of Annúminas, and to reach in thought and sight the southern stones at Orthanc and Minas Anor; in this fashion, messages could be passed between the two kingdoms by those with the strength of will to use the stones.

When the North-kingdom splintered, the Kings of Cardolan and Rhudaur fought for control of Amon Sûl and the palantír it guarded. Those kingdoms were both destroyed by evil out of Angmar, and Amon Sûl was destroyed. However, before it fell, the palantír of Amon Sûl was rescued and carried to Fornost, where it rested for many years until Arvedui Last-king took it with him when he fled (see also The Dome of Sight, *The One Ring*, page 196).

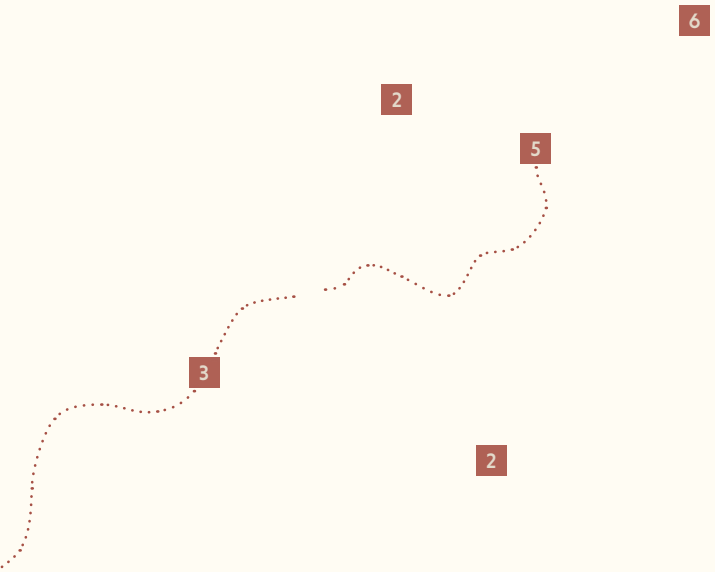
Little of Amon Sûl survives. The tower and the surrounding fortifications are overgrown ruins, and the evil Men of Angmar were thorough in their destruction — there are no hidden chambers full of treasure here, no lost secrets of Elendil or the Seeing Stones. All that remains on Weathertop is the reminder of a lost age.



cj kong (Order: 36612205)

The Rangers spread rumours the place is haunted to keep trespassers away from the hilltop, for they use it as a meeting-place and sentry-post. Weathertop commands views to the west, east and south, and keen-eyed Rangers can spot enemies coming down from the Trollshaws and Ettenmoors to trouble the lands of Men.

## WEATHERTOP




## LOCATIONS

The East–West road runs close to the foot of Weathertop. The hill's steepest aspect is its southern face, so travellers on the Road face a daunting prospect, with the sentinel hill looming over them.

These days, most travellers on the Road are Dwarves going from their kingdoms in the Ered Luin to the Lonely Mountain far to the East; few Bree-folk wander this far, although the 'haunted hill' is a common feature in ghost stories told in The Prancing Pony on an evening.

### 1. THE MILE-STONE

On the side of the road just south of Weathertop is a broken pillar, and the remains of its counterpart can be seen nearby. These stones are all that is left of a magnificent arch that once spanned the road at this point; the carven pillars are worn, but still the features of Elendil and Isildur can be discerned, especially when in the light of the setting sun as it descends into the west.

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This arch is more than a mere reminder of the vanished kings of old — the arch was once deemed the omphalos of Arnor, the middle-point of the kingdom. All distances east and west, north and south were reckoned from this spot in the shadow of Amon Sûl. The Men of the West, being descended from navigators, were excellent cartographers and surveyors, and one of Elendil's first acts was to commission a full survey of his new domain.

Scholars consulting ancient maps and chasing down the location of lost fortresses or treasure hoards in Eriador find their task to be much easier once they understand that most measurements use the Mile-stone of Weathertop as their main reference.

### 2. THE OUTER WALLS

The ruins of walls, ditches and towers can be found on the lower slopes of Weathertop and the surrounding hills. These fortifications are overgrown and sunken into the mud, and what remains can be a hard riddle to read, for there are two sets of fortifications here. Once, this was the borderland between Cardolan and Rhudaur; the two kingdoms clashed here many times, and raised many watch-towers and walls to guard the frontier. Later, the Weather Hills were a bulwark in the wars against Angmar.

The older fortifications still jut out in places, but are little more than broken stone. The newer fortifications are mostly gone, too, having been destroyed by the armies of Angmar or the ravages of time, but a few are still intact — a wall there, a storehouse, a watch-tower that in later centuries was claimed as a castle by some petty warlord.

Weathertop is home to two such intact structures. On the eastern flank of the hill is an overgrown and broken tower that can still provide a place to hide or shelter from a storm, while on the northern side, hidden in a copse of trees, is a stone house that is used by Rangers at times (and the bones of bandits who dared use the place as a hide-out lie beneath the roots of those trees).

Treasure hunters are unlikely to find anything of worth here — the ruins of Weathertop have long since been picked clean by scavengers. Any treasures that might be found here are of more recent origins — coins buried by bandits or Trolls, or Ranger-caches watched over by the stones raised by their ancestors.

### 3. THE SECRET TRACKS

A hidden path runs through the foothills of the Weather Hills, winding its way up towards Weathertop. The track runs along natural folds in the land, taking advantage of sheltered dells and banks, and in places where it would become exposed it is protected by stones or trees. The path hides travellers from view from both the hills ahead and the open lands all around.

Closer to the summit of Weathertop, the path runs along an exposed ridge, like the spine of a buried dragon. No concealment is possible there, but the path is the easiest approach to the top of the hill.

This track, and others like it, was made in the latter days of the North Kingdom, during the war with Angmar, when the Dúnedain's numbers had grown very thin and therefore stealth was more important than the grand fortresses of their ancestors. There are no treasure hoards or undiscovered secret chambers on Weathertop — but follow tracks like this off into the Weather Hills towards Fornost, and who knows what a traveller might find?

> Those who travel on these hidden paths are protected by the ancient cunning of the Rangers, and all **STEALTH** or **TRAVEL** rolls made while following the track *gain (1d)*.

### 4. THE RANGER-CAVES

The next hill north of Weathertop is Sheepshead Hill, and on the north slope, not far from the crown, is a cave mouth. It's hidden by shaggy moss and bracken, and is only barely wide enough for a broad-shouldered Man to squeeze through. The crack leads to a larger cave, and that connects to a chamber of worked stone, part of the now-destroyed cellars of a fallen fortress. This refuge is used by the Rangers when they dwell at Weathertop for a time. A thin trickle of water flows through the caves, ensuring a fresh supply, and the Rangers stow some food here too for emergencies, mostly cram and dried meats, although a lucky traveller might find a small cask of ale from the Prancing Pony or cheese and pipe-weed from the Southfarthing.

There is but one way in and out of the caves; if trapped by foes here, there is no escape.

### 5. THE HIDDEN DELL

On the western side of Weathertop is a spot that is probably the most sheltered one on the hill, with a spring of fresh water and steep-sided grassy banks, though it's badly exposed if the wind is from the west. Rangers and other travellers often camp here.

### 6. THE BROKEN TOWER

A broken tower and its foundations mark the summit of Amon Sûl. It's a lonely and desolate place, with little shelter from the constant keening wind. Nothing grows there save scraggly grass. When fog rolls in from the Midgewater Marshes, it feels as though Weathertop is an island on a white



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sea, the last outpost of a drowned world. On clear days, a traveller atop the ruins feels exposed – they can see in all directions, but they can also be seen, outlined against the sky. And to stand on Weathertop during a thunderstorm – now that is a rare thing. Weathertop is the tallest rise for many leagues around, and when a big storm gathers, the hill is wreathed in a blaze of lightning..

Of old, this place was named Amon Sûl, the Hill of Wind, and it is said in certain old tales that he who stands on Weathertop in a storm can hear the words of the wind, and speak to the spirits of the upper airs. Certainly this was a sacred place even before Elendil placed a palantír here — one can almost see the Middle Men who dwelt in the Weather Hills in previous ages of the world leaving offerings here for the birds, who they believed to be the messengers of the powers of the sky.

### 7. THICKETS

South of the Road lie thickets where flowers and herbs grow in great profusion. Long ago, there was a villa here where lords of Arnor dwelt, and the king visited here many times on the way to Amon Sûl. Notably, the leaf *athelas* can be found here.

**ATHELAS:** Accounted by many to be useful only to sweeten a foul air or to alleviate headaches, the healing virtues of the herb *kingsfoil* are well known by the Rangers of the North.

> Player-heroes carrying athelas and rolling **HEALING** to reduce the severity of the injury of a Wounded individual *gain (1d)*. If the roll is a success, then the hero that is being cured additionally removes 1 point of Shadow. Using athelas on a Player-hero who is not Wounded does not have effects in game terms.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### OUT OF THE WILD

Weathertop is a significant landmark, known by all travellers in Eriador. If the Company becomes lost or separated, the peak is the obvious rallying point. This is especially true in the fogs and rainstorms that sometimes assail travellers in these parts — Weathertop rises high above the mists, and can be seen from a great distance.

### ALARUMS

Weathertop commands a view of the country all around. When foes came out of Angmar in days of old, it was the sentries at Weathertop who spotted their approach. When Orcs came out of their warrens in the Misty Mountains to lay waste to Eriador, Rangers watched them from Weathertop. Now, as the Orcs grow in numbers once more and the Shadow grows in the East, the Rangers once again must maintain a watch from Weathertop.

If the sentries on Weathertop did see an invading Orc-host or Wolf pack or some other peril, then the alarm would have to be raised — and that task might be entrusted to any travellers the Rangers happen to encounter on the Road. There are very few Rangers, after all, and Eriador is wide. Player-heroes might be sent to race west to Bree, or even east to Rivendell, fighting to stay ahead of any wolves or outriders sent by the attacking forces.

### MEETING THE RANGERS

If the Company wishes to make contact with one of the ill-favoured types who call themselves Rangers, then they should make for Weathertop. There is no place in the North (save the secret fastnesses of Rivendell and the Angle) where a traveller is more likely to encounter one of the Dúnedain. The Rangers are a reserved folk, sharing little of themselves and their ways. There are no more stalwart companions on the Road, but they do not trust easily, and one may be friends with a Ranger for twenty years and not even know the fellow's real name.

### THE RANGER CACHE

The Rangers hide supplies like firewood or travelling gear in hidden caches on Weathertop — and they sometimes hide other things, too. Messages, for example, or maps, or treasures recovered from some ancient tomb or ruined city, or tokens taken from the corpses of fallen foes. An innocent traveller who happens across such a cache might be drawn into the intrigues of the Rangers and their desperate struggle against the Enemy.



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# The Hill of the Sleeper

*"…tombs more splendid than the houses of the living…"*

### RUMOUR

*"Deep within the Swanfleet marshes, there is a secret place — a sunken palace, mostly lost beneath the mud. It is not a house, for no one dwells there, but neither is it a tomb, for the one who lies there is not dead — for in the depths of the cave lies an Elf-maiden on a stone bier, her long golden hair spilling over the edge like a waterfall of light. She lies there, unmoving and silent, still as a statue, but if you listen closely, you may hear the faint sound of her breathing. Her beauty is breathtaking, this fairest of the Fair Folk — marred only by the wound in her ankle, where two fang-punctures and corrupted skin tell where a serpent struck her."*

*"Long has she slumbered, encased in imperishable crystal. The people of Swanfleet hold her to be a spirit or a goddess, and believe that she watches over them in her dreams. To guard the Maiden, they have added to the palace's defences, permitting dangerous creatures to dwell here, so that only the Wise-women of Medcaute can enter the palace safely."*

### OLD LORE

*"The tale of Nethig is mostly lost even to masters of Lore; her sad tale transpired in the years just before the fall of Eregion. Many Elves were slain in those terrible wars, and Nethig is often accounted among the victims of Sauron's armies, not Sauron's treachery. Lore may recall strange tales of a haunted hill in the depths of Swanfleet, where a river-maiden slumbers. Few know where the palace lies, for it is sunk beneath the mud or shrouded in thick vegetation. Once, a paved pathway led from the Whispering Halls of Celebrimbor to the doors of the palace, but this road was destroyed long ago. Perhaps the Wise-women of Medcaute recall something of the place."*

*"While Eregion is long since destroyed, there may yet survive records in Moria of the building of the palace, for it was done by Dwarven masons of that city."*

## Background

This story is told among the Elves.

In the days of Eregion, before the Second Enemy revealed himself, the Elf-maiden Nethig walked in the woods of Swanfleet. She was of the people of Celebrimbor, and was one of the artificers and jewel-smiths who worked with him. Nethig's delight was in the sky, in birds on the wing and in the winds of the upper airs. Some say she made herself wings of swan-feather and Mithril, so that she could soar over the Misty Mountains with the birds.

Another of Celebrimbor's apprentices — or, as some tell it, Celebrimbor himself — fell in love with Nethig, and she with him. Blessed was their joy, and her spirit soared higher than any bird can fly, even the Eagles of the West.

The Enemy came to Eregion in disguise, claiming to be a friend of the Elves. He sought the secrets of ring-making, and tried to persuade Nethig and her lover to share their secrets with him. When they refused, Sauron grew wroth. He crept away into the marsh, and returned in the shape of a poisonous serpent. He waited until Nethig went walking again in Swanfleet, and then he stung her with his fangs.

Nethig did not know it was the Enemy who had wounded her, and she thought she would soon recover — for the Elves are blessed with strength and good health, and do not know sickness or poison. But this was no serpent, but the Enemy in serpent-form, and so the wound did not heal, and Nethig continued to weaken.

The Enemy — again in the guise of a friend — returned to Nethig, and to her lover. Perhaps he offered to use his healing arts in exchange for ring-lore, or perhaps he planned to wait until she perished, and then bewitch her lover in his time of grief. The tales do not tell.

Instead, they speak of the choice before Nethig. She could go west to the Havens, west over the Sea, and find healing in the Undying Lands. Or, she could abandon her physical body and send her spirit winging west to the Halls of Mandos, to wait out the world. But Nethig desired neither of these things — she loved the airs of Middle-earth, the swans in flight against the grey skies of Minhiriath, and the calling of the curlews on the waters of Gwathló. She wished to stay, even as the poison ate away at her flesh.

In desperation, she used all her talent to forge a ring. Its wearer would fall into an enchanted slumber, and remain untouched by time. By this ring, Nethig planned to endure until the Elves could find a cure for the poison that ailed her. She walked one last time into the woods of Swanfleet, and as the sun sank behind the reedbeds into the west, she slipped the ring onto her finger, and fell to the ground as one dead.

Her lover vowed to save her. He placed her upon a bier, and had the craftsmen of Moria build her a palace where her body could rest until it was healed. No doubt her lover planned to study the healing arts, and to consult with the healers and herbalists — but there was no time. War came to Eregion. The Enemy had forged in secret the One Ring to Rule Them All, and sought to bring all Middle-earth under his sway. Some say Nethig's lover was slain by Orcs, and his dying body cast into the mud of Swanfleet. But the Enemy never found Nethig's resting place, and there she slumbers still, unaware of the sorrows and horrors of the wider world.



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## THE WISE-WOMEN

The nearby village of Medcaute (page 19) is home to a small coven of Wise-women, elders of the Swanfleeters who live together in a crannog and study secret lore pertaining to healing, herbalism and prophecy. Much of their lore was taken from the Hill of the Sleeper, and they guard the secrets of this place jealously. Often, they come here to study the texts in the Chamber of Healing; more rarely, they bring wounded warriors here to treat their injuries (the warriors are drugged with certain herbs before the women bring them here, so the warriors believe the hill to be an enchanted otherworld, beyond the bounds of Middle-earth).

Roll a Success die when the characters first arrive at the tomb to determine the disposition of the Wise-women.

| ROLL | DISPOSITION |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | None of the Wise-women are at the Hill; however, if they learn that there are intruders in their sacred place, they respond with fury. |
| 3 | There's one Wise-woman studying in the Chamber of Healing. |
| 4 | There's one Wise-woman and a wounded Swanfleeter in the Chamber of Healing. |
| 5 | Three Wise-women have gathered in the Chamber of Memories to discuss matters of the marsh. |
| 6 | All six Wise-women are at the Hill, to conduct one of the ceremonies where they make offerings to the Sleeper or to choose a new Ghost Bird. |

The Wise-women are physically frail – they are old mortal women, bent double and exhausted from a long life of labour. They carry sharp knives, which they can use to make a sudden stab or cut, but do not have the endurance to carry on a long fight. If the Hill is attacked and the Ghost Bird cannot defeat the intruders, then they can call a mob from Medcaute to defend the Hill.

The leader and eldest of the Wise-women is Mother Wendreth (see page 20).

## *The Ghost Bird*

According to the tales, the Ghost Bird is a marsh-wight or monster that has haunted Swanfleet for as long as anyone can remember, slaying outsiders and the unworthy with his terrible spear, then vanishing back into the mists. No weapon can harm the Ghost Bird, and no foe can catch him.

In reality, the Ghost Bird is a role, handed from one warrior of the Swanfleeters to the next. To become Ghost Bird, the prospective candidate must abandon all claims of kinship or family, and swear to defend the marsh from outsiders. Only then may they take on the mantle and the regalia – the bone mask, the cloak, the wooden stilts that allow the Ghost Bird to move swiftly through the marsh, and a magic spear of Elven make.

The Ghost Bird make their home in the Hill of the Sleeper, but spend long weeks out hunting in the marsh, especially when there are rumours of intruders. If the Player-heroes are lucky, the Ghost Bird may be absent when they arrive at the Hill of the Sleeper. If they are unlucky, well – the Ghost Bird knows this hill better than the Dwarves who built it, and their wrath is a terrible one.

**THE GHOST BIRD**
Swift, Stealthy

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 6

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | RESOLVE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 2 | 6 | +3 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Magic Spear 3 (6/18, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Fierce.* Spend 1 Resolve point to *gain (1d)* on an attack and to make the roll *Favoured*.

*Ghost Bird's Nest.* While the Ghost Bird is in the Hill of the Sleeper, all their rolls are *Favoured* and all attack rolls against it are *Ill-favoured*.

*Ghost Bird's Speed*. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Resolve to make the attack roll *lose (1d)* and make it *Ill-favoured*.

*Wooden Stilts.* The Ghost Bird may attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance, including Rearward, and may escape from combat on their turn without making any roll. The Ghost Bird is stripped of this Fell Ability if wounded twice or reduced to zero Endurance: in either case, cancel the Wound, return the Ghost Bird to full Endurance, and delete this Fell Ability.



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### JOURNEY EVENTS

Finding the palace is a challenge. Only the Wise-women of Medcaute know exactly where the palace lies, and they do not share this secret with outsiders. Without a guide, the only way to find the palace is to search the marsh. Three clues point to the location of the Palace of the Sleeper.

First, the remnants of the Eregion road. The paving stones are mostly lost beneath the mud, but in places ancient Elven statues survive, depicting watchful guardians.

Second, Nethig loved the swans and birds of the marsh, and so the palace looks out over a wide pool, mirror-still, where the birds gather.

Third, that stretch of the marsh is plagued with a curious breed of serpent that is found nowhere else in Middle-earth. The marsh-snakes are beautiful to look at, with many-hued scales that glimmer in the sunlight, but they are vicious and aggressive, and their poison is exceedingly potent.

Once the general region of the palace is found, the building itself must be located. Most of the palace has sunk into the swamp, leaving only the spires still visible at ground level. The grand entrance is lost in the marsh, but there are other ways in. An explorer can descend via one of the surviving spires (locations 1 or 2) and enter the palace below. Alternatively, the grand balcony (location 14) is still above ground, but is so hidden by weeds and tree-roots that it is extremely hard to find.

## LOCATIONS

The Palace is remarkably well-preserved for a ruin from the Second Age. It shares something of the magic of Nethig's ring, protecting it from the ravages of time; if the ring were removed from the palace, it would soon collapse.

It is a palace made by the Elves of Eregion in concert with the Dwarves of Moria, each at the height of their skills. The artistry of Gondolin is remembered in these walls of carven stone. All is geometric perfection matched to flowing natural lines, leading the eye to the great arched windows that once looked out over the beautiful lakes of Swanfleet. Those windows are blocked with mud now, or choked with weeds.

As originally constructed, the palace had three spires around a three-tiered structure, all wrought of marvellous stone that matched the colour of the sky; the stone is not reflective, but changes its own colour with the dawn. Within, a corridor spirals up from the outer ring to the chamber where Nethig slumbers, passing through rooms made to please her spirit as she sleeps, as well as storage chambers where possessions dear to her are kept. The makers of the palace intended it to be a place of beauty and healing, a place where Nethig could rest and recuperate once a cure was found for the poison that yet courses through her veins.

While the palace is now lost and overgrown, and there are dangers here, this is not a place of shadow. There are no Wraiths here, no Orcs or Goblins. Much evil must befall a place before it wholly forgets the Elves.

THE PALACE

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### 1. THE NORTH SPIRE

This is one of the two intact spires; it rises from the marshland, a thin finger of stone jutting up towards the sky. There's a single west-facing window, some twenty feet above the ground; tales say that on certain nights, the figure of a woman can be seen there, staring sadly out at the stars. A narrow staircase spirals down the inside of the spire, leading to the Outer Ring (5). The staircase is so narrow that intruders must go single file.

### 2. THE WEST SPIRE

The west spire has partially collapsed, and is mostly hidden in a thicket of thorn trees. The remains of the spire now resemble a large well — or would, if it were visible, but it's usually hidden beneath branches. This is the entrance kept by the Wise-women of Medcaute, who use the Palace below as their holy sanctum. When they visit the palace, they enter by means of this spire, climbing down the narrow spiral stair beyond to reach the Outer Ring below (5).

### 3. THE SOUTH SPIRE

The south spire has collapsed entirely; the staircase within is blocked and impassable.

### 4. THE ANCIENT GATE

This was once the entrance to the palace, but is now entirely blocked by mud and debris. Two statues stand guard over the entrance, one depicting a spear-wielding Elf-warrior, the herald of the Valar, and the other depicting Elbereth Star-kindler, her hand casting gemstones into the sky as stars.

### 5. THE OUTER RING

Once beautiful, with images graven by the Dwarves depicting the deeds of the Elves of Eregion — including the forging of rings and the events leading up to Nethig's slumber — the corridor of the Outer Ring is now choked with tree-roots and dirt. The section between the foot of the West Spire (2) and the Entrance Hall (6) has been cleared out by the Wise-women, but the rest of the Outer Ring is a harrowing crawl through a dark, narrow tunnel that floods in wet weather.

### 6. THE ENTRANCE HALL

The entrance into the main body of the palace. Another pair of Elven statues waits here, these ones depicting the sun and moon in their eternal dance; the sun carries a blazing torch of celestial flame, the moon a pale lamp. The sun-statue is partially made of gold, the precious metal running in rivulets through sculpted gaps in the black marble; the moon of silver matched with pale white marble.

> There's a Lesser Hoard to be gathered here, for those who are willing to hack the statues to pieces and destroy this beauty forever (a Misdeed worth the gain of 2 Shadow points).

### 7. THE SPIRAL CORRIDOR

This long corridor spirals up from the Entrance Hall (6) to the upper level. As with the corridor below, the path is partially blocked in places by roots and debris.

The Wise-women of Swanfleet have laid some of their honoured dead to rest here over the centuries, and their cloth-wrapped bones slumber in niches carved into the corridor wall. They're all arrayed in imitation of Nethig in the chamber of the sleeper above — they wear white rags and lie with their hands folded, a copper ring on one finger, the brittle grey strands of their desiccated hair hanging over the edge of their graves.

Archways leading to the various chambers (locations 8–11) open up on the right-hand side of the spiral; there were once narrow shafts opening along the top of the left-hand wall, but these are all choked with weeds or mud, and lightless.

## THE BOTTOM FLOOR

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### 8. THE CHAMBER OF BIRDS

The Chamber of Birds is pitch-black and half-full of muck — there was once a wide shaft, but it's mostly blocked now by mud as the palace slowly sinks into the marsh. The room was made to remind Nethig of the birds she so loved, and the walls are covered with images of birds in flight. Exploring Player-heroes get the bizarre impression that they are surrounded by unseen or ghostly birds — the air seems full of bird-cries and the thunder of beating wings.

**AMBUSH!**

The Chamber of Birds is sometimes used as a lair by the Ghost Bird. If the Player-heroes were spotted as they searched the Swanfleet marshes for the palace, the Ghost Bird may be waiting here in the darkness to ambush or stalk them.

### 9. THE CHAMBER OF SONG

The Chamber of Song contains a single seat, carved out of marble. Anyone who sits in the chair hears songs of the Elves of Eregion, silent for four thousand years. These songs are joyful, not sad — echoes of a time before the Elves despaired of Middle-earth, of that brief time between the defeat of Morgoth and the rise of Sauron, when Middle-earth was free and it seemed as though Arda Marred could be repaired through craft and courage. Listening to these songs of joy restores 1 point of Hope (2 points to Elves).

The Wise-women use this chamber as an oracle, seeking prophecy and revelation in the echoes of a past age.

### 10. THE CHAMBER OF MEMORY

Once, there was a pool here, a marble basin surrounded by descending steps. Rainwater falling from a shaft in the ceiling filled the basin, and in the waters images could be seen, visions that recalled the days of Hollin's glory. All gone now — the water-shaft is blocked, the basin filled with the muck of centuries.

Instead, this room has become the ceremonial meeting place for the Wise-women of Medcaute; they gather here when it is time to choose a new Ghost Bird or when danger threatens the Swanfleet. The descending steps form a make-shift auditorium, where all the Wise-women can gather and discuss matters of import.

The room is also used by the Ghost Bird, who sleeps and eats here when not stalking the marshes.

### 11. THE CHAMBER OF HEALING

Of the four chambers, this is the only one in good repair and regular use. This has been a place of healing for thousands of years. In the centre of the chamber is a stone bier, and around it are baskets of healing herbs and leeches. Drawings on the walls depict elements of anatomy — the circulatory system, and diagrams of organs, for the Elves of Eregion knew much of surgery and medicine that has been forgotten.

This chamber has clearly been used relatively recently — there's food in one of the baskets, and a woven blanket for a bed in one corner. The Wise-women bring the sick and wounded of Medcaute who cannot be healed elsewhere to this secret sanctum, where the worst injuries can be treated.

**INSPIRATION**

Wounds treated in the Chamber of Healing never become infected — Player-heroes making rolls of HEALING here are considered to be Inspired.

### THE MIDDLE FLOOR

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### 12. THE VAULT GUARDIANS

This doorway is guarded by two more statues, this time depicting Elven sentries, eternally watchful. The statues were imbued with potent magic to prevent anyone from opening the door they guard, a spell that turned into a curse with the passing of long, dark centuries, and the bones of three thieves lie on the ground between the statues as a warning to other would-be tomb robbers.

Engraved on the door in Elf-letters are the words: LET THERE BE NO SORROW, LET THERE BE NO MOURNING. LET US DANCE ONCE MORE, BEFORE THE WORLD'S ENDING. SPEAK, AND THAT WHICH IS YOURS SHALL BE RESTORED.

Only Nethig's voice can open the door safely. Others who try instead gain 2 points of Shadow (Sorcery). Whoever fails their Shadow test or becomes Miserable is struck by a sensation of incredible weight. Their limbs become much too heavy to lift, their legs can no longer bear the weight of the body. All the victim can do is slump to the floor.

A successful ATHLETICS test lets the victim crawl back down the corridor away from the statues and escape death; a second failure here means the intruder lies down on the cold floor and cannot move again. If one struck by the curse approaches the door again, the curse strikes automatically.

An ally unaffected by the curse can easily drag or lift a victim away, but if everyone's caught by the magic, the whole Company is doomed. Elves or Elf-friends automatically sense the presence of the curse, and can choose to stay their hand before attempting to open the door.

The Wise-women have never passed the vault guardians; that door, they say, shall not be opened until the world's ending.

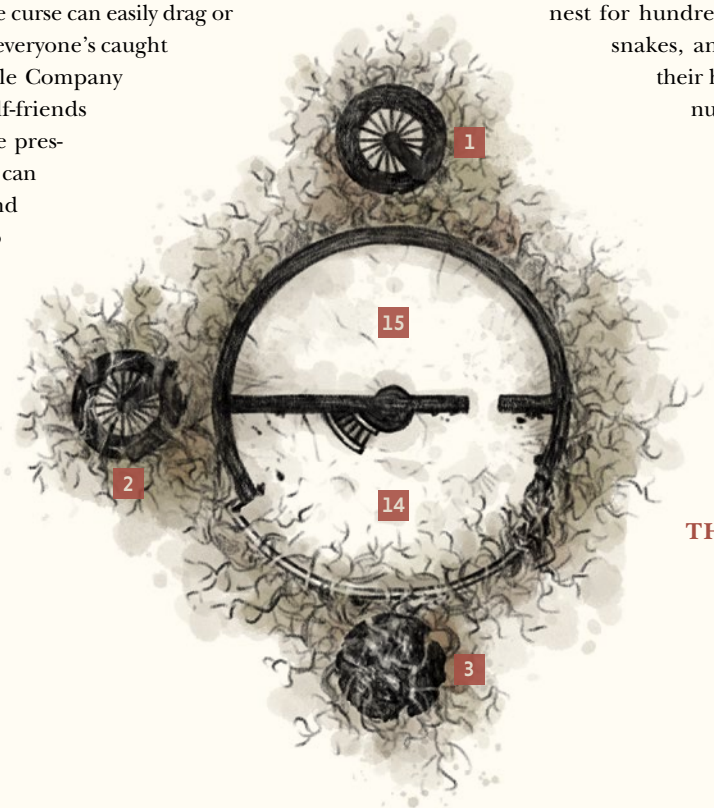
### 13. THE VAULT

This is the treasure vault of Nethig, a noble Elf of Eregion at its height, and the treasures here are fabulous indeed. There is gold and silver jewellery, and glittering gems set in Mithril necklaces, and gowns and robes of shimmering woven light, preserved by the magic of Nethig's ring. There are books here, too, treatises on craft and ring-lore and history; instruments, for Nethig loved to play the flute softly, echoing the cries of the birds on the lake. There are tools, a ring-maker's workshop all packed up awaiting the return of the craftswoman.

In total, there is a Marvellous Hoard here — a fortune beyond compare, but the greatest value may be in Nethig's books and tools. Here are secrets of ring-making lost since the days of Celebrimbor.

### 14. THE GRAND BALCONY

When this palace was first built, the Grand Balcony overlooked the swan-haunted lakes and pools of the marsh. Now, it's so hidden by weeds and roots and piled earth that the balcony resembles a cave or cleft in the hillside. It's a dark and noisome hole — and thronged with snakes. This chamber is a nest for hundreds upon hundreds of Marsh-snakes, and they become aggressive if their home is disturbed. The greater number of serpents coils around the entrance to Nethig's chamber, as if waiting for her to awaken so they can bite her again, as Sauron did long long ago.




THE TOP FLOOR



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### *Marsh-snakes*

These beautiful many-hued serpents are things of Shadow, corrupted by the echo of Sauron's presence here long ago. Their lair is in the upper part of the hill, but they can slither anywhere, hiding and waiting for the right moment to strike.

**MARSH-SERPENT** — **ATTRIBUTE LEVEL** 1

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1 | 1 | – | 0 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Bite 2 (1/14, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Poison*. If an attack results in a Wound, the target is also poisoned (grievous Endurance loss; see *The One Ring*, page 134, for the effects of poison).

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

### 15. THE SLEEPER

Here, in a casket of crystal atop a marble plinth, lies the Elf-maid Nethig. She is dressed all in white, a large ring of Mithril clearly visible upon her right ring-finger. Here she sleeps until the world changes.

The casket can easily be opened, but Nethig will not wake if disturbed — not unless the ring is removed from her finger. If she is awoken, then she instantly gasps in pain; the venom of Sauron is still working its way towards her heart, and she knows she has only a brief time to live.

**NETHIG:** Once a maiden of the vanished land of Eregion, Nethig has slept for four thousand years, and is unaware that Eregion has been destroyed, that Moria has fallen, that Númenor has sunk and its successor kingdoms risen and fallen, or that a new Enemy has arisen in Middle-earth. When she was hale and healthy, she was mighty among her kin; she loved the land and the creatures of Arda, and poured that love into the jewels she made. She sought to understand the living land, to wake the world and converse with it. Now, she lies in enchanted sleep, waiting until a cure is found for the venom that courses through her.

If awakened, kindly characters might be able to persuade Nethig to answer a few questions before she puts the ring back on and returns to her slumber. If told of the peril to the lands she once loved, Nethig might instead forego the remainder of her life and endeavour to craft a magical item or weapon for the heroes before her body perishes (should Nethig choose to do so, the Loremaster can use the rules for Marvellous Artefacts and Wondrous Items, or even those necessary to design a Famous Weapon or Armour — see *The One Ring*, pages 161 and 162).

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### CONCLAVE OF THE WISE-WOMEN

Player-heroes who seek the wisdom or aid of the Wise-women of Medcaute may be brought here, to the Hill of the Sleeper, to receive oracles and meet with the Wise-women in conclave. The common practice is for the Wise-women to drug their guests, so they cannot tell where they are going, and then the Ghost Bird escorts them into the Hill and up to the Chamber of Memories or Chamber of Healing. Thus, the characters have only vague, dream-like memories of their visit to the Hill — but that may be enough to impel them to return to Swanfleet in search of that enchanted palace.

### ASSAULT ON THE HILL

Should some foe — like the Black Númenóreans (page 33) or the Agents of Saruman (page 41) — discover the existence of the Hill of the Sleeper, then the Player-heroes may find themselves helping the Ghost Bird defend the Hill against intruders. If a cold-hearted foe reaches Nethig, then the only question is what kills her first — her captors or the poison in her veins?

### THE HEALING OF NETHIG

Nethig went into her enchanted slumber to wait until the scholars and healers could find a cure. The wars of the Enemy have laid waste to Eregion and Nethig's resting place was forgotten, but there are still great healers in the world. Heroes who discover Nethig might seek out such a healer, or try to bring the Elf-maiden to a healer's abode.

The likeliest candidate is Elrond Half-elven; he has the skill to cure Nethig, but the Player-heroes would have to bring the crystal casket from Swanfleet to Rivendell — and once Nethig's body is removed from the palace, it will be like a blazing beacon to those with eyes to see. Every Orc in the Misty Mountains and every thing of darkness will be sent to capture the vulnerable Elf-maiden.



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# MOUNT GRAM

*He charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields…*

### RUMOUR

*"To the north, a group of bandits is kidnapping travellers to sell them to the Orcs and Goblins of Mount Gram. They say they have an agreement with this dark fortress' Orc-chieftain and are compensated with old Dwarven gold left behind when the Enemy took over the tunnels of Durin's Folk in the Misty Mountains. They say the creatures of this nefarious mountain hate the Hobbits of the Shire above all else, and they are already planning vengeance against that small folk."*

### OLD LORE

*"This place was once the home of a clan of industrious Dwarves, who built a mighty fortress and hundreds of tunnels beneath the mountain. Lost long ago to the Enemy, its depths fester with his servants; Goblins, Orcs, Trolls and even worse things. However, there are Dwarves who claim these creatures haven't discovered all the secrets left behind, and there might still be tunnels and treasures forgotten inside."*

## BACKGROUND

Mount Gram became a stronghold of Orcs and Goblins in the middle of the Second Age, when their armies, led by the Enemy, seized the surrounding mountains from the Dwarves. For thousands of years after, this Orc fortress posed a threat to the Free People of northern Eriador, launching raids and waging war against Men, Hobbits, Elves and Dwarves who stood in their path.

In the Third Age, when the war against Angmar united the Free Peoples of the North, Mount Gram was also attacked. Then, with great sacrifice, the forces of the Enemy in this land were greatly reduced and the tribes inhabiting this place fled wherever they could, including to the depths of the mountains.

A few hundred years ago, however, Orcs and Goblins began to return, and multiply their numbers, once again making Mount Gram a powerful threat to the region. A great Orc-chieftain quickly grew in power and united the tribes to form a terrible army to raid and pillage their ancient enemies to the south. The army did horrible deeds and killed many, but it was ultimately stopped by an unlikely force of Hobbits led by Bandobras Took, the Bullroarer, who killed King Golfimbul, the Orc-chieftain, himself. From that day on, the Goblins and Orcs of Mount Gram have held a special hatred for Hobbits.

Now there is a new chieftain, Radgul, a wily, cruel and cunning Orc who has entrenched a hatred for Hobbits deep within his twisted heart. Although theoretically under the command of the Orc king under Mount Gundabad, Radgul makes his own rules, and the distance between the two ragged mountains allows him great liberty. His orders, for now, are to bide his time and wait for further instructions from Mordor, but the Orc-chieftain of Mount Gram has other plans, and is already putting some of them in motion. Especially those involving the Shire and its nasty inhabitants.

### JOURNEY EVENTS

On the top of Mount Gram nest great flocks of birds. They are large and cunning magpies, watching with keen eyes for any gleam of precious metal or stone carried by travellers. If a Company travelling close to Mount Gram is carrying any Treasure (Precious Objects, Marvellous Artefacts or Wondrous Items, etc.) the magpies will attempt to steal it.

A successful roll of **HUNTING** may forewarn a Look-out or Hunter that a large number of the birds are watching the Company's progress. If the roll fails, the magpies quietly steal a random piece of Treasure – how the birds are able to carry away a shield or sword is a mystery! Wary Player-heroes carrying an object targeted by the birds can make an **AWARENESS** test to avoid being fooled.

Should the Player-heroes want to recover something, to reach the magpies' nests they must climb the mountain to the top. The trek takes at least a couple of days. The first day is a tiring walk, but not a dangerous one (unless they alerted the local Orcs...). The second day is different; to get to the top of the peak, the heroes must brave a sheer rock face. This can be presented as a Laborious Skill Endeavour, at a Hazardous Risk level.

Player-heroes who successfully ascend to the top of Mount Gram recover what the birds took from them, and also find a Lesser Hoard.



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## LOCATIONS

The journey to Mount Gram is not a pleasant one. As the company leaves behind the Great East Road to venture north, they will pass through dangerous lands, going through the fog-shrouded Ettenmoors just before reaching the feet of Mount Gram, the greatest and most wicked-looking mountain on this arm of the Misty Mountains.

The cold moors that must be traversed before reaching their destination hide many perils, including a large number of Trolls, who will not hesitate to attack even Goblins and Orcs who travel through their territory. Even the Rangers of the North avoid this sun-forsaken region, preferring to keep watch from a distance. They have lost a number of friends to these brutish creatures already.

As the Player-heroes get closer to the westernmost portion of this arm of the Misty Mountains, they will clearly see a steep, dark and mist-covered peak rising above all others nearby. Its menacing appearance is that of the great horn of a horrible beast sleeping right at their feet. The path to its foot and the entrance to its interior inevitably lead the Company to the broken rocky hills between the Ettenmoors and Mount Gram.

### 1. OSWARD'S MEN

As they venture among the many collapsed hills and ruins that dot the landscape, the Player-heroes begin to notice tracks and signs of a group of travellers who passed here recently. The tracks and signs appear to belong to a group of men and women, possibly carrying prisoners, heading north.

The bandits don't have anyone keeping watch as they believe no one is bold enough to venture into this region unless, like them, they have an agreement with the Orcs of Mount Gram. If the Company follows the tracks carefully, they can ambush the bandits without much trouble.

Their camp is modest, with maybe six small tents and a larger one for their leader, a large-boned, angry-looking man from Minhiriath. He displays a vivid burn scar on the left side of his face and never seems to smile.

> There is one Footpad (see *The One Ring*, page 147) plus one for each Player-hero, in addition to the leader (treat him as a Highway Robber, also on page 147 of *The One Ring*).

**THE MAP:** The bandit's leader, Osward, carries with him a detailed map that leads to a secret entrance to Mount Gram, where he and his band drop prisoners for the Orcs and Goblins to feast on. They are usually met by a small group of these nasty creatures carrying their reward, but sometimes no one is there to pick up their offerings, and they are compensated later.

> The map can provide the Player-heroes a bonus to **TRAVEL** and **STEALTH** rolls if they try to approach Mount Gram unnoticed — if they pass a **RIDDLE** roll to decipher the notes added by Osward and his band, they *gain (1d)* with a normal success and (2d) if they get a great success or more.

**THE PRISONERS:** Osward has made an agreement with Radgul of Mount Gram; they trade prisoners for old Dwarven gold, and Hobbits are worth special extra rewards, especially if they can share information about the Shire's defences. Thus, they could have left the prisoners in the predetermined spot just a few hours ago, or they might be with them, holding them still chained in the camp.

**THE "PET" TROLL:** Osward has a secret weapon that keeps him and his band safe, and which they use to negotiate with their tougher opponents. They have their own "pet" Troll (a Cave-troll Slinker, see page 152 of *The One Ring*) which they captured and made a bargain with. During the day they keep it hidden away from the sun, but at night they can bring it out to hunt down escaped prisoners, defend the camp or simply to let the creature play with some undesirable visitors. If need be, however, the band won't hesitate to enter the cave to lead the Player-heroes into a trap.

### 2. THE DEADLY GORGE

A maze of hills, gullies and gorges lies before Mount Gram, and finding a path through it that is safe and hidden from prying eyes is a difficult task. Especially since the Orcs have been working to make the paths even more confusing, blocking tunnels and setting up traps to snare and kill intruders.

As the Player-heroes progress through the twisting trails around the rocks, they will stumble upon large boulders blocking their passage, wide cracks in the ground that make their progress extremely difficult, and signs that there are guards nearby.

> All this is intended to lead unwary travellers along a predetermined path, which will take them directly into deadly traps — tripwires are connected to large boulders and jagged rocks on higher ground; when someone stumbles into a wire, a trap is triggered, releasing the rocks to bury the Player-heroes. Anyone in the vicinity needs to make a **PROTECTION** roll or receive a Wound.



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3

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If the Player-heroes investigate the blocked passages, a **RIDDLE** roll will reveal the path has been blocked on purpose. The traps are not particularly well hidden, but the constant fog and mist blocks the light of the sun or even nearby torches and makes it hard to spot them — an **AWARENESS** roll can allow the Player-heroes to spot a trap just in time.

Even though there are not many sentries, the noise of a trap being triggered will surely attract a few of them (usually one Orc soldier per Player-hero and half as many Goblin Archers).

**THE HIDDEN PASSAGE:** The ominous fog also hides a passage that the Orcs of Mount Gram haven't discovered yet. If a trap is triggered and the Player-heroes examine the site afterwards, they find a hidden Dwarven gate that leads directly into the bowels of Mount Gram (see The Secret Tunnels box).

### THE SECRET TUNNELS

Long before Mount Gram was a stronghold of the Enemy it was a home to Durin's Folk. And Dwarves are a secretive people. They built secret tunnels that only a few of them knew about, and all of them forgot. Now, Mount Gram is riddled with passages that no foot has trodden for thousands of years.

These tunnels are narrower than usual, so progress is slow, and the time they have remained empty and near the forces of the Enemy has made them claustrophobic to any who cross them.

All Player-heroes gain 1 point of Shadow (Dread), as the hand of the Enemy clutches at their heart, and they feel the walls closing in around them.

A Company discovering the Hidden Passage and entering the tunnels soon stumbles upon the corpse of a Dwarf clutching a thick book. The Dwarf's name was Haradin, a scholar and counsellor to his people. In these pages they will find accounts of his travels, and a detailed map of the tunnels crisscrossing Mount Gram, which can lead the Company to any location they desire to reach (see The Belly of the Beast, overleaf).

## 3. THE BEAST'S MOUTH

The paths through the jagged cliffs and hills eventually turn north towards Mount Gram and the Company sees a narrow trail snaking its way up the foot of the mountain, until it leads to a hole in its dark stone face, an opening like the terrible gaping maw of a hungry beast from a lost age of the world.

The gates are always guarded, but the guards are not particularly attentive — the Goblins and Orcs of Mount Gram don't expect anyone to be so bold as to get near their fortress, much less try to enter through the main doors. If the Player-heroes use stealth, disguises or their wits, they have a good chance of entering the halls undetected.

In these busy times, the gates are almost always open, as small bands of scouts, hunters and warriors come and go on their errands. However, some alarm or other important warning can make the Goblins at the gate close it, making it harder for anyone to get in or out of this terrible place.

**SPIKED GATE:** The gate is protected by an iron portcullis of Dwarf-make, but modified by the cunning of the Orcs, who attached spikes to it, turning it into a weapon. If the Player-heroes take control of the gates and drop the portcullis exactly as enemies are passing below it, the targets can be crushed or pierced by its weight and sharp spikes (causing a severe loss of Endurance). The Orcs won't hesitate to use it against the Company if they are offered a chance.

**CONTAINMENT CAGES:** Recently captured prisoners are kept caged in a small, dirty stone room inside the gates. The guards on duty pass their time mistreating these unfortunate souls before sending them to the dungeons below,

### RESCUE MISSION

This location gives many opportunities for the Loremaster to introduce prisoners and other characters for the Player-heroes to rescue. They might even be journeying to this location just to rescue some important figure they know has been reported missing and taken by the Orcs of Mount Gram. The more important the individual captured, the deeper they would be in this complex, and the most important ones would be taken to the Haunted Dungeons to have their spirit broken.



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where they will suffer before being questioned, most often by Radgul himself.

At any time, there are at least three Orc Soldiers and an Orc Guard keeping watch over the gates. Most of the time, however, they are distracted, "playing" with some poor victim who has been captured, and are barely keeping track of who goes in or out of the gate. If the Player-heroes use guile and subterfuge, they could enter this place quite unnoticed, but freeing the prisoners might prove to be more complicated.

### 4. THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Before the Orcs came, Mount Gram was a mine and an outpost, not a vast underground city like Erebor or Moria. Still, the Dwarves delved deep, hollowing the roots of the mountain with many chambers, halls, and passages. Today, thousands of Orcs and other foul creatures dwell there, workers, servants, slaves, and warriors with great store of arms.

> If the Player-heroes are so foolish to enter Mount Gram openly they face certain capture, or death — the Loremaster is free to seal the Company's fate, either killing them in a hopeless battle or by throwing them into a cell in the Haunted Dungeons.

*Containment Cages*

3 *The Beast's Mouth*

*Spiked Gate*

4 *The Belly of the Beast*



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### LOST IN MOUNT GRAM

If the Company finds a way to explore Mount Gram by covert means, the Loremaster must improvise the description of such an extensive Orc-mine and stronghold, for example taking inspiration from the *Lost in Mount Gram* table below.

| FEAT DIE ROLL | RESULT | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| ᚠ | A Riddle Solved | The Player-heroes discover that many passages bear hidden Dwarven sigils. If correctly interpreted with a RIDDLE roll, they let the company leave Mount Gram from a secret exit. |
| 1 | Grisly Remains | The company finds many chambers filled with the mummified remains of hundreds of Dwarves. Their corpses have been despoiled of any valuables, and they all miss their heads. |
| 2 | Skulls for the Orc-king | Hundreds of severed Dwarven heads are piled in the centre of a circular chamber. They are mummified, and bear a mark on their foreheads, crudely cut with a knife or sharp claw. |
| 3–4 | Orc-warrens | Small windows opening on the wall of a passage allow the Player-heroes to look into deep pits, now the living quarters of thousands of Orcs, crawling like ants up and down endless stairs of wood and rope. Gain 1 point of Shadow (Dread). |
| 5 | Bottomless Pit | A crack in the ground opens across a wide passage. To get to the other side the Player-heroes must walk across a narrow stone bridge. |
| 6–7 | Orc Patrols | The company hears the approach of a patrol of Orcs (1 Orc Soldier per Player-hero). They are singing a horrible tune, and do not expect intruders. If attacked, they sound the alarm after 2 rounds of combat. |
| 8 | A Little Footpad | *Something* is following the Player-heroes. If they do not notice or detect the threat with a successful AWARENESS or HUNTING roll, a nameless shadow will steal something valuable from them the first time they stop to rest. |
| 9 | Torture Chambers | A series of high-vaulted halls, filled with all the contraptions that the wicked minds of Orcs can imagine to torment their prisoners. |
| 10 | The Haunted Dungeons | The company has reached the prison quarters of Mount Gram (see The Haunted Dungeons). |
| 👁 | Radgul | The company has attracted the attention of the Orc-chieftain of Mount Gram... (see Radgul, the Orc-chieftain, on page 108). |

## The Haunted Dungeons

The old dungeons the Dwarves built have seen many individuals of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth rot to their bones over the centuries since this fortress has been under the Enemy's command. The well-crafted walls, sturdy metal doors, and unbreakable chains bear the taint of their blood, and the place is contaminated with the grief and pain of their memories.

The Orcs and Goblins of Mount Gram place their most determined and courageous enemies in abandoned cells in these dungeons to break their spirit and drain the hope out of them before interrogation in the torture chambers above. Few survive more than a few days in these cells, succumbing to the Evil in the Shadows, as the servants of the Enemy call the entity that lives here now.

As the Player-heroes enter this place, they feel an ominous chill run down their spines — an ancient evil dwells here, and watches their every move.

Player-heroes gain 2 Shadow points (Dread) upon their arrival and 1 point of Shadow each day they stay there.



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## *The Evil in the Shadows*

So called by the Orcs and Goblins, this is a servant of the Shadow who has been feeding on the anguish and suffering of every poor individual who has been imprisoned in these dungeons for thousands of years. Now, it uses this energy and resentment to spread horror to those that seem vulnerable. If anyone in the Company gains a Shadow Point while in the Haunted Dungeons, the Evil in the Shadows wakes to exact its revenge.

The Evil in the Shadows animates the corpse of a fallen Dúnadan lord who died there when his companions encountered a band led by a cruel Orc-chieftain hundreds of years ago. Additionally, by its sorcerous powers the entity can reanimate the rotten corpses of past victims (one for each Player-hero) to make them assault those that are still living, driving fear and despair into their hearts while the rusted blades of the Undead cut their flesh.

**THE EVIL IN THE SHADOWS**
Shadow, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 6

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 2 | 6 | – | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Broken Sword 3 (5/16, Pierce), Chilling Touch 2 (6/12, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Deathless.* Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, spend 1 Hate to bring the creature back to full Endurance instead. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a magical weapon enchanted with spells for the Bane of the Undead.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Denizen of the Dark*. All attack rolls are *Favoured* while in darkness.

*Dreadful Spells*. Spend 1 Hate to raise a Forgotten Dead (see below) and make all Player-heroes gain 2 Shadow points (Dread).

*Hate Sunlight*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

*Howl of Triumph*. Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate to all other Undead in the fight.

*Thing of Terror.* At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 3 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

**FORGOTTEN DEAD**
Soulless, Stealthy

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 3

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 1 | 3 | +1 | 2 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Rusted Sword 3 (4/16, Pierce), Claws 2 (3/14, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Deathless*. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, spend 1 Hate to bring the creature back to full Endurance instead. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a magical weapon enchanted with spells for the Bane of the Undead.

*Heartless*. The creature is not affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

*Thing of Terror*. At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 3 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

### A PRECIOUS HEIRLOOM

The corpse the Evil in the Shadow inhabits is that of Eradein, a captain of the Rangers of the North who disappeared hundreds of years ago, breaking the line of a powerful Dúnadan family. The corpse still carries a signet ring and a silver brooch which his people would greatly appreciate if they were returned.



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**THE PRISONERS:** This is a perfect place to find any Loremaster characters a group of Player-heroes might be trying to rescue from Mount Gram. However, the time they have spent in these haunted tunnels may already have put a great strain on them.

The Player-heroes will need to instil hope back into these prisoners' hearts and bring the prisoners back from the edge of the abyss. To accomplish this, they must achieve a Simple Skill Endeavour, requiring rolls of **ENHEARTEN**, **SONG**, or another appropriate Skill.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### BANDITS

The band of bandits that has been providing Radgul with prisoners and victims is larger than just the few encountered in their makeshift camp in this location. There are multiple groups of them, mostly composed of Hill-men of Rhudaur looking for an easy profit, scouring northern Eriador for more victims they can abduct to trade for more ancient Dwarven gold.

> If the Player-heroes take too long exploring the hills without making any significant progress, or become lost, a group of these criminals could stumble onto them and try to rob or capture them. Such a group is composed of one Highway Robber for each Player-hero, plus two or three Footpads (see page 147 of *The One Ring*).

### *Radgul, the Orc-chieftain*

This wily, sneering and cunning Orc is the chieftain of all the Goblins and Orcs of Mount Gram and is full of his own plans and desires, which makes him unpredictable. As ambitious as he is fierce, Radgul schemes to become the ruler of all Orcs in northern Eriador, overthrowing his rivals, the Orcs of Mount Gundabad.

However, Radgul has one weakness: his hatred of the small folk of the Shire. Any sign of Hobbits in his territory will drive him into a blind rage and he will set out with his trusted guards to hunt the trespassers down.

If the Company is discovered by the Goblin scouts or other guards and these alert their brethren, the Player-heroes will need to be very quick, very capable or find a way to vanish from prying eyes if they want to survive. Radgul will mount a hunting party to track down and eliminate the Player-heroes, capturing and torturing Hobbits and Dúnedain if he can. The party is composed of himself, one Orc Soldier and one Goblin Archer for each hero, and one Orc Guard (see page 150 in *The One Ring*).

**RADGUL**
**Vengeful, Wily**

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 24 | 2 | 6 | +3 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Orc-axe 3 (5/18, Break Shield), Spear 3 (3/14, Pierce)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Great Leap.* Spend 1 Hate to attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance, including Rearward.

*Hatred (Hobbits).* When fighting Hobbits, all the creature's rolls are *Favoured*.

*Hideous Toughness.* When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured.*

*Yell of Triumph.* Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate to all other Orcs in the fight.



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# FORT ARLAS

*There agelong she had dwelt, an evil thing in spider-form…*

### RUMOUR

*"Fort Arlas was an old fortress built at the time of the kings that was taken over by savage Hill-men many years ago. It has changed hands several times between different warlords, as it is known that anyone who dwells there for any length of time becomes sombre and melancholic."*

### OLD LORE

*"In an age lost to memory there was a terrible combat between a noble Dúnadan and a Great Orc. They fought in single combat for many days and nights until both fell, each slaying the other, on a tall hill rising over the wetlands, under the branches of a willow tree. Many years later, the Rangers built a fort at the precise spot where the combatants' remains still rest."*

## BACKGROUND

Once upon a time, in the time of the King, a young Dúnadan named Damrod chased and fought the one-eyed Great Orc Gnarsh in the hills of Rhudaur. Damrod was part of a group of travellers who were murdered by the Orc one night, as they camped. Damrod was the only survivor, and fled into the marshes on the northern bank of the Hoarwell. Once recovered, the surviving Dúnadan became the hunter and pursued the monster relentlessly.

When Damrod finally managed to catch Gnarsh they fought for days on end. Eventually, both combatants were exhausted, but Damrod was on the brink of death, bleeding from many wounds. The fight had taken them up a tall hill, where Arlas, the tallest and oldest willow tree in all of Eriador, rose. It was under its boughs that Gnarsh swung his club at Damrod in a final sweep, only to see the swing parried by Damrod's sword at the last moment. In the manoeuvre, Damrod broke his blade, but trapped the club in a lock. Both combatants were weaponless for a split second, but Damrod was quicker to recover — he drew his dagger and plunged it deeply into an open wound in the monster's chest, piercing his heart.

Both fighters fell dead on the spot, still gripping their weapons, upon the welcoming roots of Arlas.

Long after their duel, the Rangers of the North built a fort on top of the hill and named it Fort Arlas. From there, they patrolled the marshes of the Ettenmoors. Eventually, the fort was abandoned, and tribes of Hill-men have made themselves at home behind its sturdy walls ever since.

## LOCATIONS

What the Player-heroes find once they reach Fort Arlas is a broken curtain wall, a number of stone houses severely damaged by fire, and a deep hole right at the feet of a fallen willow tree.

The place was recently raided by Dolomedia (see page 112), who killed many of the Hill-men living in the Fort and scared off the survivors — she then felled the willow tree and laid eggs in the hole below it. She came to Fort Arlas expressly to do so, drawn by the dark and foreboding atmosphere emanating from the spot where the remains of the Great Orc Gnarsh are located — right among the roots of Arlas, the willow tree.

The whole place is currently half-burned and covered in thick cobwebs. Spiders of all shapes and sizes roam about. They will ignore the Player-heroes unless they start attacking or get too close to Dolomedia's eggs.

### 1. THE FORT

The fort has a commanding view of the area, and on a clear day, one can see almost all the Ettenmoors. On a particularly clear and sunny day, someone with the talents of an Elven scout should be able to see from Mount Gram to the outskirts of the Trollshaws, and over to the Dwarven domains on the westernmost side of the Misty Mountains.

A tall and once-sturdy curtain wall protects a number of locations and outbuildings. A raised walkway runs along the outer wall, to allow sentinels to spot potential threats and raise an alarm. There are also three big two-story houses with walls of stone; at the time of the Dúnedain, two families used to live in each of the houses, with each family occupying a separate story while sharing some common rooms. The fort housed several farm animals to feed the population there, a water reservoir, and a dry store full of cereal, dried meat and vegetables.

The largest building is a barracks, capable of housing up to 20 men in its large hall. There is a large bell on the rooftop that was meant to be rung from the centre of the main room if necessary. In order for the bell to be rung nowadays, the Player-heroes will need to climb to the rooftop (if rung, the bell can be heard for many miles around, and will attract both the Hill-men who survived the attack and Dolomedia herself).

There is a central open area, with the giant willow tree named Arlas in the middle of it. This was originally used as a training ground for troops, but now the tree has been brought down. It rests on top of one of the barracks, a large hole opening right beneath it.



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### JOURNEY EVENTS

Player-heroes exploring the lone-lands along the course of the northern Hoarwell can have some interesting encounters...

## *Balder the Boatman*

Balder is a simple man with a simple job. He owns a boat, and spends his days fishing up and down the River Hoarwell and its tributaries. If the Player-heroes meet him, they can ask Balder to give them passage north from the Last Bridge, or any point in between that the Loremaster deems appropriate, through the marshes, to within walking distance of Fort Arlas, just hours away from it. He can tell them how to survive in the wetlands and about some of the risks.

Once the journey has started (maybe a day after departure) Balder will tell the Player-heroes that they can spend the night before their final day of travel in the dwelling of Hildilid, an old friend who he brings food and supplies on occasions when his ferry passes by her hut.

**OCCUPATION:** Boatman

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Generous, Rustic

## *Hildilid the River-hag*

Hildilid is a good character, although everything around her suggests she is a witch living in the middle of nowhere. She lives in a humble hut on a tiny piece of dry land, surrounded by dandelions and mosquitoes.

She is about sixty years old, and used to be an adventurer in her youth. She led a company of heroes that protected the inhabitants of a group of farmsteads a few miles west of the Last Bridge. She had a husband and a daughter but she lost them both to a Hill-men raid. She speaks Dwarvish, but mistrusts Dwarves. She has never seen Hobbits or Elves before, but knows of their existence and is curious to meet them in this latter part of her life.

Hildilid can tell the Player-heroes about her life in the swamps over the last 20-odd years. She tells them about the dangers, and if asked specifically, she once saw Dolomedia roaming in the swamps from a distance (see page 112). She can also tell stories of will-of-the-wisps and ghosts; half of these are fiction, and the rest are just half-truths, but entertaining nonetheless.

Hildilid is not particularly inclined to travel with the Player-heroes or act as an adventurer again, but if they can persuade her she might perform one last heroic deed. She is not aware that Norwinda, the daughter she lost long ago, is still alive and is now the leader of the Hill-men tribe that has recently been driven away from Fort Arlas (see page 113).

**OCCUPATION:** Old adventurer, Wise-woman

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Stern, True-hearted

### 2. THE HOLLOW UNDER THE TREE

If the Player-heroes lean out to gaze into the hollow, warm, pestilent air rises in their faces. From above, the hole looks like a twisted maze of vines and roots, covered in wet moss and dripping spiderwebs. The eggs that Dolomedia laid are in the hollow below. The air there is almost unbreathable, as the heat produced by the quivering eggs smothers any Player-heroes climbing down. Small spiders take care of the nest, containing about a dozen melon-sized eggs, ready to hatch at any moment. There are silk cocoons surrounding the monster's eggs, containing fresh animals of various sizes: cats, a dead goat and even a living small pig (Garaldon, the Hill-men's beloved mascot — if they manage to deliver it alive back to them, that can lead to an interesting moment).

Larger Spiders lie in wait, ready to assault the Player-heroes if they get too close to the brood. The smaller Spiders cannot trouble the Company much, but they will immediately rush to alert Dolomedia if the Player-heroes get too close to the eggs, using strands of spiderweb to swiftly ride the wind — if this happens, Dolomedia will leave her lair in the marshes immediately and reach Fort Arlas in less than one hour (see Dolomedia's Lair, below).



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**LARGE SPIDER**
Pitiless, Swift

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 4

| ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 1 | 4 | — | 2 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Fangs 3 (4/14, Pierce), Webs 4 (—, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Great Leap.* Spend 1 Hate to attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance, including Rearward.

*Poison.* If an attack results in a Wound, the target is also poisoned (grievous Endurance loss; see *The One Ring*, page 134, for the effects of poison).

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack *Ill-favoured.*

*Thick Hide.* Spend 1 Hate point to gain (2d) on a Protection roll.

**CURSED BONES:** If the Player-heroes inspect the bottom of the fallen tree, they discover that the bones of a tall Man and a Great Orc lie intertwined within the maze of roots and vines. They still hold in their hands the weapons they used to fight each other, a gigantic club and a broken sword.

In the mannish skeleton's left hand is a long dagger, still stuck among the powerful ribs of the dead Great Orc. If the Player-heroes untangle the roots to recover the dagger, they draw the attention of the shade of Gnarsh, the Great Orc that was killed by that blade (see page 113).

### 3. DOLOMEDIA'S LAIR

Dolomedia hides in a half-sunken cave under a small hill at a distance of about 20 miles from Fort Arlas. The entrance is guarded by thousands of small spiders that will alert Dolomedia as soon as the Player-heroes get near. The place is drowned in water, waist-deep for a Man or Elf. The ground below the water is uneven and will make walking quite uncomfortable. The Player-heroes will stumble into rotten corpses, mostly animals but some Men too, lying under these stinking waters. A few yards in, spiderwebs make further progress difficult. The whole cave is dark.

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## DOLOMEDIA'S LAIR

The main passage leads to a small waterfall. Hidden behind this is a passage leading into Dolomedia's lair; a cavern barely 10 by 10 yards, full of the dry and rotten remains of her victims. Dolomedia will lie in wait for the Player-heroes here, where they will have difficulty moving about.

If the Company overcomes Dolomedia in her lair, they are rewarded with the discovery of a Greater Hoard, accumulated by the patient Spider-thing across the centuries.

## SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

### *Dolomedia, the Monstrous Water Spider*

Dolomedia is a creature of myth, many ages old, spawned from the belly of the seventh daughter of Ungoliant. Her bulbous body is covered in white spiky hair, with two dark grey streaks running over her back from her head to the tip of her abdomen. Her body is full of bald spots where water Spiders of similar appearance and different sizes constantly run over wet pustules. She is taller than a war-horse, and much longer. She is at home both on the surface and underwater, and has made the swamps of the Ettenmoors her hunting grounds and home.

The creature lives in the wetlands, but constrains herself to very limited activity. She hunts for food fiercely for a short time every few years, and then rests in slumber in her flooded refuge. She has learnt to stay away from large gatherings of Men, unless pressured to do otherwise. She is a dark and powerful monster, whose longevity is explained by her prudence in threading the path of Men.

Dolomedia spawns Spiders both small and large on a regular basis, but to give birth to a creature as marvellous and terrible as herself is something that only happens once every hundred years, and then only if she finds the perfect spot for the eggs to mature. This is just what she did in Fort Arlas, a site she deemed worthy of her noble offspring. If allowed to mature, the eggs will give birth to a terrible brood of monsters the likes of which have not been seen in Eriador in centuries...

**DOLOMEDIA**
Cunning, Cruel

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 70 | 2 | 9 | — | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Fangs 3 (6/16, Pierce), Webs 4 (—, Seize)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Hate Sunlight*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

*Hideous Toughness.* When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

*Great Leap.* Spend 1 Hate to attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance, including Rearward.

*Poison.* If an attack results in a Wound, the target is also poisoned (grievous Endurance loss; see *The One Ring*, page 134, for the effects of poison).

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack *Ill-favoured.*

*Thick Hide*. Spend 1 Hate point to *gain (2d)* on a Protection roll.

*Thing of Terror*. At the start of the first round of battle all Player-heroes in sight gain 3 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.



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### NORWINDA AND THE LAST HILL-MEN FROM FORT ARLAS

Norwinda is Hildilid's daughter, even though she would not recognize her at first glance. She is 30 now, and has a daughter and two sons of her own. Her husband, Leiknir, was wounded escaping from Dolomedia. He is still a good warrior, but not as strong as she is, especially in his current condition.

Norwinda is the current leader of the Hill-men who lived in Fort Arlas; while not born a Hill-woman herself, she grew up among them. Now that the established leaders of the tribe have been killed or maimed by Dolomedia, she has risen to the occasion and taken on the responsibility of protecting the survivors.

Soon after they were driven from Fort Arlas, Norwinda realised that the Spiders were not chasing them. She gathered her people and her surviving family around a primitive shelter in the swamps to recover. She won't relinquish her responsibility until everyone is safe.

Norwinda is not willing to put anyone else at risk, but she has asked a couple of warriors of her folk to return and check the situation at Fort Arlas. She will wait for the best moment to return home, and maybe the Fort's bell sounding through the mist is the signal to rally the last survivors to reclaim their home.

## *Gnarsh, the Great Orc*

This monster was a feared commander and warrior who killed hundreds with his club. Belonging to a superior breed of Orc, Gnarsh was an incarnated servant spirit. When he was slain by a mere young mortal, the spirit could not find rest. He lingered in confusion among the hills of Rhudaur for centuries, but was drawn to Fort Arlas once again when Dolomedia uncovered his remains.

> The spectre of Gnarsh haunts anyone who comes to possess the dagger that killed him. He appears once every moon, when the night is black like the one on which the Orc was killed, and attacks the bearer of the dagger and all those who are with him.

Gnarsh cannot be killed, and will continue to haunt the Player-hero again every moon, until the dagger is destroyed – when this happens, the curse will be lifted.

**GNARSH**
Brutal, Vengeful

| ATTRIBUTE LEVEL | ENDURANCE | MIGHT | HATE | PARRY | ARMOUR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 28 | 2 | 7 | +3 | 3 |

**COMBAT PROFICIENCIES:** Orc-club 3 (8/14, –)

**FELL ABILITIES:** *Deathless.* Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound. When an attack inflicts damage to the creature that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, spend 1 Hate to bring the creature back to full Endurance instead. This ability is ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a magical weapon enchanted with spells for either the Bane of the Undead or the Bane of Orcs.

*Hatred (owner of the dagger).* When targeting the owner of the dagger, all attacks by Gnarsh are *Favoured.*

*Horrible Strength.* If the creature scored a Piercing Blow spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured.*

*Snake-like Speed.* When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured.*



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# The Ranger-haven

*"Well, here is our refuge," said Faramir. "Not a place of great ease, but here you may pass the night in peace."*

### RUMOUR

*"The homeland of the Rangers lies to the east of Eriador, beyond the Last Bridge. I don't rightly know where, exactly, but it's somewhere in that wild land over the river. Some of those Rangers are unnatural tall, to my mind, and you know who else lives beyond the river and is taller than Big Folk? Trolls, up the Trollshaws. I'm not saying Rangers are half Troll, but I ain't not saying it either, eh?"*

### OLD LORE

*"Few now remember them, yet some still go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in loneliness, guarding from evil things folk that are heedless. The Land of the Rangers lies in the Angle made by the meetings of the rivers Hoarwell and Loudwater. Now, this land is beyond the traditional borders of the old kingdom; it was part of the land of the Elves, but doubtless they have all gone West over the Sea and left Middle-earth behind."*

## Background

After the fall of Arthedain, last of the north-kingdoms, the descendants of the Númenóreans became a wandering people, patrolling the borders of their lost domain. The Chieftains of the Dúnedain were, by long tradition, fostered in the house of Elrond Half-elven in the hidden valley of Rivendell, and in time the lands around Rivendell became the customary home of those Dúnedain who did not go ranging — the very old and the young, those with child, and so forth.

Eventually the Dúnedain moved south, into the land called the Angle between the two rivers. Partly, this move was to ensure the secrecy of Rivendell — although by now the Eye of the enemy was trained on Gondor and the Witch-king had left the north, still there were Orcs and watchful things in the mountains, and a gathering of too many folk might have given away the location of the Hidden Valley. Partly, too, the Angle was deemed a fair land. This region is bountiful, made fertile by the flood plains of the two rivers. In times past, other folk dwelt here — long long ago, the Men who lived in these lands were associated with the Dwarves of Moria, and the orchards and tilled fields of the Angle fed the hungry smiths and miners. Many centuries later, the land was inhabited by Stoor-hobbits, who delighted in the streams and rivers of the place. (Some Stoors may still linger in the south of the Angle, though they fear Men and have become so quick and stealthy that not even a Ranger can catch them).

A casual traveller — or scouting Orc — passing through the Angle would not know the Rangers dwelt here. Their homes here are built in imitation of Rivendell — they dwell in steep-sided valleys sheltered from view, or in isolated farmsteads, or in secret caves. There are no towns or villages here, no roads save the Road that marks the northern boundary of the Angle, and few major landmarks of any kind. Only ancient ruins might tell an unwary wanderer that this place was ever inhabited.

It is a strange place, this Angle. On one level, it is one of the strongholds of the Free Folk, a defensible bulwark inhabited by the descendants of the Men of Westernesse and bolstered by their friends the Elves. Orcs and Trolls fear to cross into the Angle, lest they be slain by 'ghosts' or 'mischance'. Here, wanderers have their home and kinfolk, and can rest in relative security. At the same time, though, the Dúnedain can never forget that they are the last survivors of a ruined kingdom, that the forces that destroyed their homeland are still hunting them, and that one mistake — a careless word let slip to a traveller, a hearth-fire seen from afar, an heirloom worn too openly — might bring disaster down not only on oneself, but on all one's friends and kin. With no small cause are the Rangers stern and grim.

## Locations

This section presents the land that the Rangers of the North call their home. Hardly the destination of adventurers exploring the lone-lands of Eriador, it may prove useful if the Company includes one or more Rangers, or if their patron is Gilraen the Fair (see *The One Ring*, page 218).

### 1. THE BARROW OF ARANARTH

By custom, the kings of the north were interred in stone tombs, as their forefathers were in Númenor of old. Pyres were for heathen kings, and it was only in the fading years of Cardolan and Rhudaur that they took to the custom of barrow-burial. In Arthedain, the practice of laying the kings to rest in stone continued until the fall of the kingdom.

Now, Arvedui Last-king perished at sea, and his son Aranarth became the first chieftain. Knowing that the salvation



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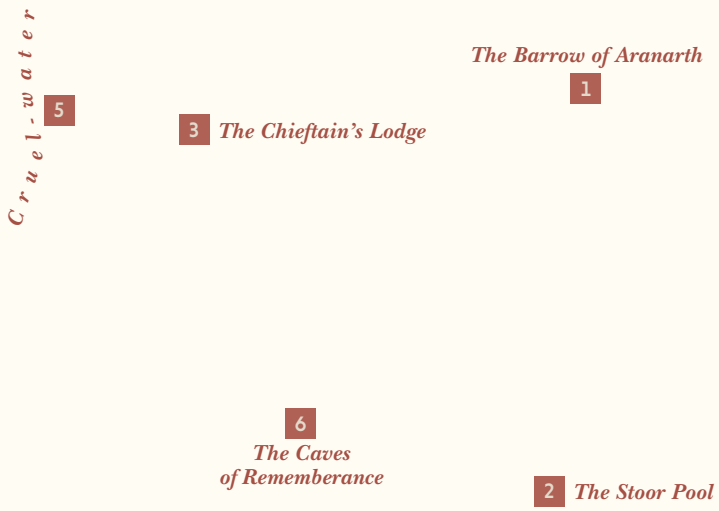
## THE RANGER-HAVEN




of his people lay in secrecy, Aranarth ordained that he should be buried in a barrow when he died.

Partly, this was for the eyes of outsiders: it was a sign that no great king was buried here, so the folk of this land could not be Númenórean. It was also an admonition to his people to be humble — they were lords of the West no more. In further token of this, he had the heirlooms of his House — the Ring of Barahir, the Shards of Narsil, the Star of Elendil and the Sceptre of Annúminas — given into the care of Elrond, and Aranarth was buried without any treasures, save a broken sword and a tattered cloak.

The subsequent chieftains were mostly laid to rest in the Caves of Remembrance (page 116), so the barrow stands alone. By custom, it is a gathering-place for the Dúnedain; they come here when weighty matters must be discussed, or a new chieftain acclaimed.

### 2. THE STOOR POOL

The Stoor Pool lies on a bend on the river Loudwater. It's a tranquil stretch of water, silty and slow-flowing, fringed with a lush growth of reeds. The Rangers keep boats here, hardy canoes and river-boats that can navigate the rivers all the way down to the ruined port of Lond Daer. Hidden in the rushes is a sacred stone, a flat slab that is marked with ancient runes. Some of the first explorers from Númenor who travelled upriver into what was then the wild woods marked the stone, and the bones of one of the explorers are interred beneath it. The bones have long since rotted, but something of her spirit remains. It is said that those who would see Númenor may sleep on her grave, and if they are lucky, they will be blessed with a vision of the isle in its days of glory. Unlucky souls may be cursed with a desire to go to Sea, or a nightmare of the Downfall that haunts them for the rest of their days.



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### 3. THE CHIEFTAIN'S LODGE

The chieftain of the Dúnedain is, by custom, fostered by Elrond of Rivendell; once the chieftain comes of age, they lead the Rangers in their lonely vigil across the ruins of the north. Few spend much time in the Angle, not until their long lives are spent and they can no longer travel in the Wild as they once did. The Chieftain's Lodge, therefore, is more of a ceremonial house than an actual home; it is the last remnant of the court of Arnor.

The Lodge is no great palace; it is a well-made house of wood and stone. It is a little larger than other houses of the region, but not noticeably grander. There is, however, an unmistakable aura of sanctity to this place — High Elves, Wizards and the descendants of kings have gathered here, and there is power that cannot be wholly concealed.

Hidden beneath the lodge is a secret vault containing certain lesser treasures and heirlooms carried out of Fornost Erain. Chief among these is the Horn of Eärnil, a war-horn once worn by the King of Gondor, carved from the horn of one of the great kine of the East. Eärnil sent this horn north with his messengers in the year 1973 of the Third Age, in token of his promise that Gondor would aid Arthedain. The horn is blown to summon Rangers should foes invade the Angle.

### 4. ERTHAD CELYN, THE CASTLE OF MEETING WATERS

This castle stands on a group of rocks near the spot where the waters of the Hoarwell mingle with those of the Loudwater. It is a remarkable sight — the towers are built on stone bridges and arches that leap from rock to rock, so when the river is at full flood in the spring, the fortress seems to be floating on the waters. There has been a fortress here for many Ages of the world — its foundations were made by the Dwarves of Moria in better days, although the towers above have fallen and been rebuilt many times since by different folk — petty kings, Númenórean explorers, Men of the West, servants of Angmar…

Today, Erthad Celyn appears to be nothing but a lonely ruin, although the Rangers keep parts of the fortress in good repair, and it could be returned to use quickly if needed. Should enemies invade the Angle and make it impossible for the Rangers to escape, they could take refuge here.

However, many among the Rangers dislike the place, for some taint of Angmar lingers here, and the running waters have not yet carried it away.

### 5. CRUEL-WATER

On the western side of the Angle, not far from the Last Bridge, is the stream called Cruel-water. It does not look like much — a fast-flowing little river in a steep stony defile — but an evil spirit dwells in the stream, and has taken the lives of more than a few travellers. Cruel-water has many tricks to play on the unwary — it might lure victims with dreams, or appear shallow and easy to ford just before it unleashes a swift flood, or catch them with choking weeds. Some travellers report seeing Cruel-water manifest as a beautiful woman, haughty and vengeful, with a cloak woven from the last breaths of all she has murdered. Other tales insist that Cruel-water issues from a cleft in the rock along with foul vapours from deep underground, and that the waters carry some taint that makes them dangerous to drink. The Dúnedain avoid the Cruel-water, but it still catches travellers on the Road.

### 6. THE CAVES OF REMEMBRANCE

The location of these caves is unknown even to most Dúnedain — only those close to the Chieftain of the Rangers are entrusted with the secret path that leads to these caves. The entrance to the caves is equally well concealed, the opening buried by stones and boulders. Within, a lightless passage slopes steeply down. Carvings of ancient kings guard it, and the Elves who wrought them put power into them; evil things cannot pass by these protective stones, save at great cost.

Follow the passage down as it winds, and the traveller comes to the burial place of the Chieftains of the Rangers. These are simple tombs of stone, unadorned with any mark save the Star of Elendil. Fourteen tombs are here, from Arahael to Arathorn II. The Rangers have not the wealth nor the inclination to inter any grave-goods with their dead kings, although the bodies are wrapped in winding-sheets of shimmering grey woven by the Elves of Rivendell. A side chamber holds two plinths of differing sizes, made in the hope that the lost palantíri of Arnor might one day be found.

There is a treasure here, although it is a bitter one. Continue past the tombs, and a brave explorer comes to a vault where weapons are laid in store. This arsenal holds weapons of war — swords, spears, lances, helms and shields, and coats of mail. Most of these blades were made many centuries ago, but the caves are bone-dry and the weapons are kept in good repair, so even the oldest swords are still strong and sharp. The Rangers do not customarily wear heavy armour, nor do they carry such weapons openly, and in any case, there are weapons enough here to equip far more warriors than the Angle can muster. This arsenal is for the folk of the North-kingdom should they march to war.



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## Schemes and Trouble

### SPIES AND UNFRIENDLY EYES

Secrecy is the chief defence of the Angle. The attention of Mordor is focussed on the south, but the Enemy has not forgotten Elendil marching out of the north with Gil-galad, and the name of Imladris is still whispered in the halls of the Barad-dûr. A threat from Eriador is unlikely, but cannot be ignored. However, the north is far from Mordor, and Sauron's arm has not yet grown so long that he can easily find and crush his foes. He knows little of Eriador since the fall of Angmar — names like 'Shire' or 'Ranger' or 'Hobbit' are wholly unfamiliar to him. Therefore, he must send such scouts and spies as he can recruit, foul Beasts and evil or weak-willed Men.

The Dark Lord returned to his fortress in Mordor, and he assumes that his foes would do the same, so most of these scouts prowl around the ruins of Fornost Erain, looking for signs that the warriors of Arthedain have returned. Others keep watch on the Roads and mountain passes. Only a handful ever come near the Angle — but they must be swiftly silenced, lest they give away the location of the Rangers. If the Player-heroes meet such a spy of Sauron, the chase is on!

### THE COMPANY OF ARASIL

Now Arasil was a kinswoman of Arador, the grandfather of Aragorn, but they rarely agreed on anything. She held that it was folly for the Dúnedain to linger here in this nigh-empty land, squandering their strength defending ungrateful or ignorant folk. She argued that they should go south and make a new home on the borders of Gondor, accepting the authority of that city. "Better it would be," she argued, "to serve in another's land and live, rather than rotting here in a lost realm and consoling ourselves with tales of the kings of old." For a long time, this was just hollow talk, but then her cousin Arathorn became Chieftain, and died soon after, leaving the chieftainship resting on young Estel, a boy only two years old.

Without a Chieftain, the Dúnedain were ruled by a council who met in the Chieftain's Lodge, and there Arasil's voice was among the loudest. Even now that Estel has taken on his true name of Aragorn and the mantle of leadership, Arasil exerts considerable influence among the Dúnedain. She has gathered a retinue of other Dúnedain who feel as she does. She would never disobey her Chieftain, but her ambition is growing, so while Aragorn is away on his errantries, there is no one to hold Arasil back from, say, making contact with lords in the southlands and offering them the services of her men as mercenaries and adventurers.

### *Arasil*

In person, Arasil is stern and proud, a haughty noble of an ancient line. She wears her greying hair long, pinned with an ancient jewel that is an heirloom of her house that she displays openly. She dwells in a fine house in the southern Angle, close to Erthad Celyn, and her household warriors wear her sigil on their cloaks as though she were a petty-queen. In her youth, she was a close friend of the sons of Elrond, and certainly those two Elf-lords are brash and bright enough to make a mockery of any fetish for secrecy.

She might serve as a patron for adventurers, sending them south to Gondor, west to the ruins of Annúminas or Fornost Erain, or even north-east into the dread land of Angmar. Alternatively, she might be a foe for the Company, if her machinations lead her down the same ruinous path of ambition as the Black Númenóreans...

**OCCUPATION:** Noble

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURE:** Lordly, Proud

### THE RING OF ERTHAD CELYN

Legend holds that when the Men of Angmar held the castle of Erthad Celyn, the ruler of that place was named the Lord of Nightmares; in some tales he was a Man, and in others an Orc. All tales agree that he was entrusted by the Witch-king with a magic ring — a lesser ring, not a ring of power, but still a potent treasure. By means of this ring, he could send forth his spirit and enter the minds of his sleeping enemies, stealing their secrets or sowing terror. He used this power to torment his prisoners.

When the armies of Gondor came to crush the realm of Angmar, they laid siege to Erthad Celyn. Rather than be taken alive, the Lord of Nightmares cast himself into the fast-flowing river, and his body was never found. Some say the ring drowned with him; others say he buried the ring somewhere in the castle, and that it still sends out nightmares to torment those who dwell there. More fanciful tales hold that the magic of the ring ensnared its wearer, and that the Lord of Nightmares is now trapped in an eternal waking nightmare, forcing him to walk the land forever as an Undead ring-wight that feeds on dreams.



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# appendix

*The Authorities, it is true, differ whether this last question was a mere 'question' and not a 'riddle' according to the strict rules of the Game…*

The present section offers a number of optional game mechanics, for Loremasters and their groups of players to adopt for their games (or ignore at their discretion!).

## Optional Councils and Skill Endeavours

The following paragraphs introduce an optional system to determine the time limit of Councils and Skill Endeavours, aimed to make complex interactions and tasks more challenging.

### Time Limit for Councils

As seen on page 106 of *The One Ring*, during the Introduction stage, the spokesperson of a Company makes a Skill roll to determine the total number of attempts that the Player-heroes are granted to present their case. Using these optional rules, the time limit is determined as follows:

- If the Introduction Skill roll is a failure, the time limit is equal to 3.
- If the roll is a success, the time limit is equal to 4, plus 1 for each Success icon (ᘔ) rolled.

### Time Limit for Skill Endeavours

As seen on page 132 of *The One Ring*, the Loremaster sets the total number of attempts that the Player-heroes are granted to complete the endeavour. Using these optional rules, the time limit is determined as follows:

- If the Company hasn't enough time to complete the task, the time limit is set to 3;
- If the Company has only a short time, the time limit is equal to 4;
- If the Company has enough time, the time limit is set at 5;
- If there is plenty of time, the time limit is set at 6 or more.

## Borrowing Items of Superior Worth

The box on page 79 of *The One Ring* and the one about *Fate and Predestination* on page 161 explain why extraordinary items improved with one or more Rewards or Blessings are meant to be strictly individual, and cannot be handed over for others to use, not even in the case of character death. But in the books, Sam Gamgee carries Sting for a while, and even wears the One Ring — to reflect such an uncommon occurrence, this prohibition can be waived in the case of characters bonded by a particularly strong friendship.

- If the group agrees, a Player-hero can spend one point of Fellowship to borrow an item belonging to their Fellowship Focus, be it a useful item or a piece of war gear enhanced with one or more Rewards or Blessings.

The Fellowship expenditure allows the Player-hero to use the item for a full scene (see *The One Ring*, page 126).

## Subtle Magic and the Eye of Mordor

When is the effect of a Magical success considered to be a 'blatant display of magical power', as the rules for the Eye of Mordor are concerned (see page 169 of *The One Ring*)? The Loremaster must adjudicate on a case-by-case basis, as the rule for Magical successes is very flexible — it can cover things as subtle as blowing animal-shaped smoke rings with a pipe, to suddenly disappearing from sight.

- In general terms, a Magical success achieved using a Cultural Blessing or Virtue should not be considered a blatant magical display, while one obtained using a marvellous artefact or wondrous item must be evaluated as a potential cause for an increase in Eye Awareness, using the guidelines presented on page 171 of *The One Ring*.

Magical objects whose power is directly aimed at concealing their users should not cause an increase, of course (for example, a cloak with a blessing of **STEALTH**), unless the item is cursed (for example, it is Hunted, or Owned).



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Zoril, Black Númenórean Warlord



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**Border Lands**

**Wild Lands**

**Dark Lands**

**Impassable Terrain**

**Perilous Area**

1 hex = 20 miles

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*In the westlands of Eriador, between the Misty Mountains*
*and the Mountains of Lune, the Hobbits found both Men and Elves.*
*Indeed, a remnant still dwelt there of the Dúnedain,*
*the kings of Men that came over the Sea out of Westernesse;*
*but they were dwindling fast and the lands of their North Kingdom*
*were falling far and wide into waste.*

Eriador, the lone-lands described in *The Lord of the Rings*™, comes alive as never before in this supplement for *The One Ring*™, the official tabletop roleplaying game based on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. A region often described as deserted becomes a crucible for adventure, offering many hours of gameplay.

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- **Chapter 3: Landmarks** adds twelve sites of interest in the style of the one presented in the core volume. These locations depict both 'historical' sites mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*™ or *The Hobbit*™, and others that have been created specifically for the game.



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